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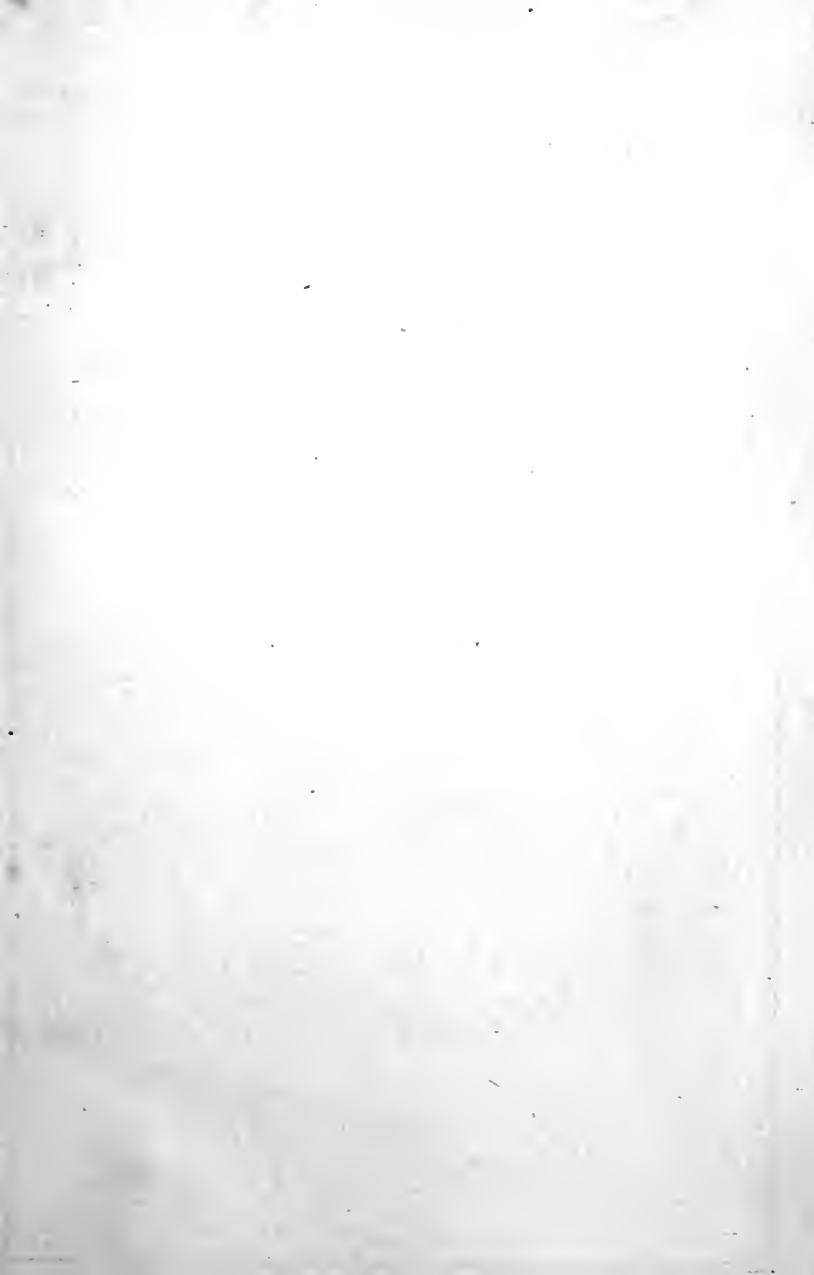
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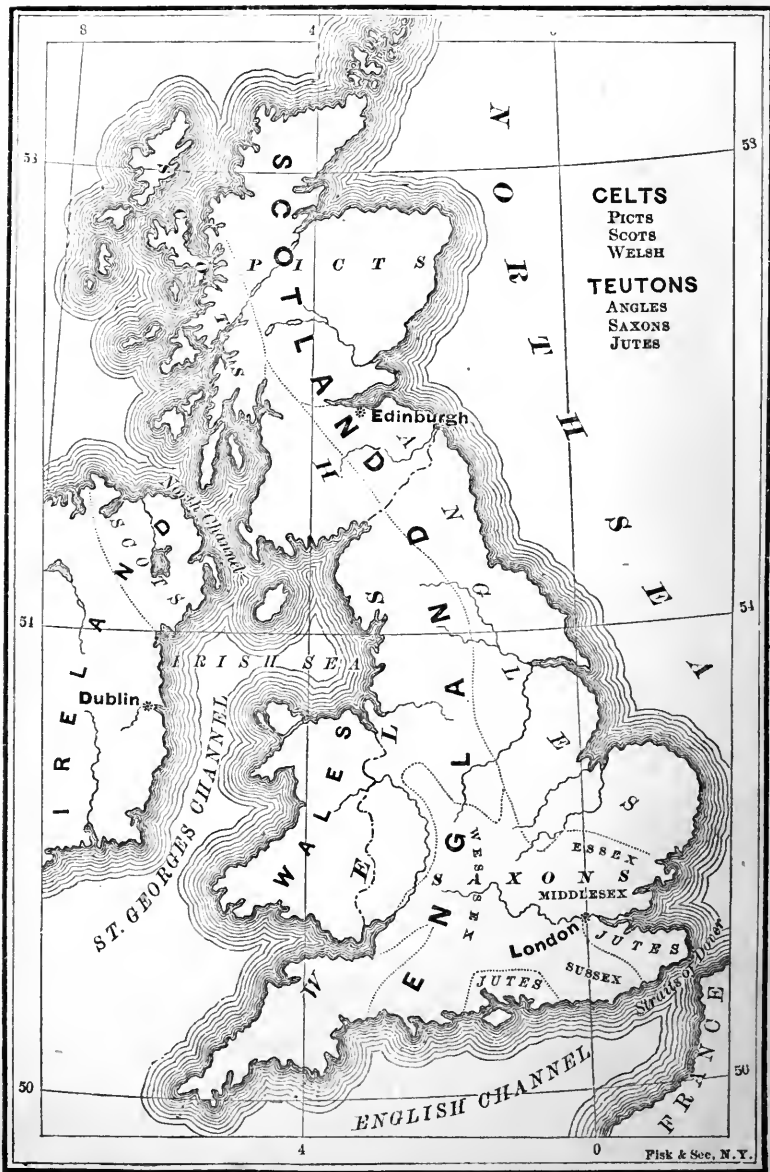
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*A map of Britain at the close of the sixth century, showing the distribution of its Celtic and Teutonic population.*



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Jan

PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF "SHAW'S MANUAL"

BY

TRUMAN J. BACKUS, A.M.,

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN VASSAR COLLEGE.

NEW YORK:

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# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY.....	5

## CHAPTER II.

ENGLISH LITERATURE BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST.....	13
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

FROM THE CONQUEST TO GEOFFREY CHAUCER.....	21
--	----

## CHAPTER IV.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.....	26
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE CONTEMPORARIES OF CHAUCER.....	43
------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

FROM CHAUCER TO SPENSER.....	49
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VII.

THE NON-DRAMATIC ELIZABETHAN POETS.....	60
---	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
THE DAWN OF THE DRAMA.....	73

## CHAPTER IX.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.....	84
--------------------------	----

## CHAPTER X.

THE SHAKSPEAREAN DRAMATISTS.....	102
----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

THE PROSE LITERATURE OF THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD.....	114
---	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

THE SO-CALLED METAPHYSICAL POETS.....	130
---------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

RELIGIOUS WRITERS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE COMMON- WEALTH.....	137
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN MILTON.....	142
------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

THE LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION.....	159
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE CORRUPT DRAMA.....	179
------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANS OF LOCKE'S TIME.....	186
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVIII.

	PAGE
THE ARTIFICIAL POETS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.....	197

## CHAPTER XIX.

PROSE WRITERS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.....	214
--	-----

## CHAPTER XX.

THE FIRST GREAT NOVELISTS.....	237
--------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXI.

HISTORICAL WRITERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.....	248
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXII.

ETHICAL, POLITICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL WRITERS OF THE LATTER HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.....	254
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DAWN OF ROMANTIC POETRY.....	265
----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXIV.

WALTER SCOTT.....	288
-------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXV.

BYRON, MOORE, SHELLEY, KEATS, LEIGH HUNT, LANDOR, HOOD, BROWNING.....	299
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAKE SCHOOL—WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE AND SOUTHEY.	318
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXVII.

	PAGE
THE MODERN NOVELISTS.....	328

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.....	338
---	-----

---

 PART II.

## A SKETCH OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

- I. 485-1356. Anglo-Saxon.  
 II. 1066-1400 IV. transition.  
 III. 1400-1558. Reformation.  
 IV. 1558-1625. Elizabethan  
 V. 1625-1660. Puritan  
 VI. 1660-1702. Regency  
 VII. 1702-1714. Queen Anne Age  
 VIII. 1714-1800. Federalists  
 IX. 1800-1884. Present Age.



## P R E F A C E.

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THOMAS B. SHAW'S *Outlines of English Literature*, rewritten by William Smith, LL.D., and published as *A Complete Manual of English Literature*, has been held in high esteem by American teachers during the last ten years. While its merits have been recognized, its defects, too, have been discovered. The work was intended by its American publishers to be used in colleges only, but, owing to the want of a more suitable text-book, it has come into extensive use in high-schools and academies. In order to meet the criticisms of teachers who have introduced it into these schools, a thorough revision of the Manual has been made.

In the revision I have attempted,

- (1), To improve the logical arrangement;
- (2), To correct the lack of unity in several chapters;
- (3), To simplify the style.

Mr. Shaw sought "to render the work as little dry—as readable, in short—as is consistent with accuracy and comprehensiveness;" but his abounding use of relative constructions and his involved sentences defeated his purpose

to some extent; for they defied the patience of many students. In endeavoring to present the topics in a clearer style, it has been necessary for me to rewrite many of the chapters.

As compared with the Manual, the peculiarities of this volume are,

(a), A fuller discussion of the "Old-English" and "Middle-English" literatures;

(b), An assignment of prominent positions to the most famous writers;

(c), A free use of short and striking quotations from the works of the keenest English and American critics—in some cases inserted in the text, in others given as foot-notes, and in others placed at the head of a chapter, for the purpose of inciting the student to a more curious and appreciative reading of an author;

(d), A collection of references to the best collateral readings upon the topics considered;

(e), The use of a few simple diagrams, intended to aid the student in remembering important classifications of authors;

(f), The omission of authors who have not contributed to the historical development of our literature.

It will be observed that several essays in this volume are printed in a conspicuous manner. A reason must be given for this innovation upon the usual typography of text-books. Among teachers of English literature, there is a growing conviction that much time is wasted in the class-room by

attempting to learn about too many authors. Such an attempt is dissipating to the mind of the student, and is most unsatisfactory to the teacher. Wherever the students can have access to a good library, it will be found to be the most profitable use of the time generally allotted to this subject to have them study brief biographies of the few authors who have wielded potent influence over our thought and our language, to have them read the best criticisms upon these authors, and the best passages from their works. With this plan in view, the essays on Chancer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Burns, Scott, and Byron, have been printed in the most attractive manner; references have been furnished to judicious criticisms of their works, and to choice specimens of their writings. This peculiarity of the book has not been allowed to disturb the orderly presentation of a general outline of the history of our literature.

Following Mr. Shaw's plan, I have refrained from discussing the lives and works of English authors who are now living.

The *Sketch of American Literature* was written by the late Henry Theodore Tuckerman in 1852. In 1870, the year before his death, he revised it for publication in the last edition of the Manual. It has received plentiful and most appreciative praise. It is adapted to the wants of the classroom, supplying to the teacher just the outline needed in explaining to his students the marvellous growth and variety of American literature, and giving to the students a model of easy and genial criticism. In making this revision of

the Manual, I have been unwilling to tamper with an essay, so elegant in its style, and so discriminating in its thought.

Throughout the volume references are made to Professor B. N. Martin's Choice Specimens of English and American Literature. The black-faced figures (1) refer to the sections in his books.

TRUMAN J. BACKUS.

VASSAR COLLEGE, }  
*August 29, 1874.* }



## A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

---

THOMAS BUDD SHAW, born in London, on the 12th of October, 1813, was the seventh son of John Shaw, F. R. S., an eminent architect. From a very early period of his life, though of delicate constitution, he manifested that delight in the acquisition of knowledge which was continued throughout his subsequent career. In the year 1822 he accompanied his uncle, the Rev. Francis Whitfield, to Berbice, in the West Indies. That gentleman was eminently qualified to advance his nephew in his studies and in the formation of his character. On his return from the West Indies, in 1827, Shaw entered the Free School at Shrewsbury, where he became a favorite pupil of Dr. Butler, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield. There it was remarked of him that, although inferior to some of his contemporaries in the critical exactness of his scholarship, he was surpassed by none in the intuitive power with which he comprehended the genius and spirit of the great writers of antiquity. At this early period he rapidly accumulated that general and varied knowledge of books, which when acquired seemed never to be forgotten.

From Shrewsbury, in 1833, Mr. Shaw proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge. On taking his degree, in 1836, he became tutor in the family of an eminent merchant; and subsequently, in 1840, he was induced to leave England for Russia, where he commenced his useful and honorable career, finally settling in St. Petersburg in the year 1841. Here he formed an intimacy with M. War-

rand, Professor at the University of St. Petersburg, through whose influence, in 1842, he obtained the appointment of Professor of English Literature at the Imperial Alexander Lyceum. His lectures were eagerly attended; no professor acquired more thoroughly the love and respect of his pupils, many of whom continued his warmest admirers and friends in after life. In October in the same year he married Miss Annette Warrant, daughter of the Professor.

In 1851 he came to England for the purpose of taking his degree of Master of Arts; and on his return to Russia he was elected Lector of English Literature at the University of St. Petersburg. His first pupils were the Princes of Leuchtenburg; and, his reputation being now thoroughly established, he was in 1853 engaged as tutor and Professor of English to the Grand Dukes, an appointment which he retained till his death.

For nine years Mr. Shaw's position was in every respect enviable; happy in his married life, loved by his pupils, respected and honored by all for his high attainments and many virtues, his life passed in peace and prosperity. A few years more, and his means would have enabled him to retire and pass the evening of his life in literary pursuits. But this was not to be. In October, 1862, he complained of pain in the region of the heart; yet he struggled hard against his malady, until nature could bear no more. For a few days before his death he suffered acutely, but bore his sufferings with manly fortitude. On the 14th of November he was relieved from them, dying suddenly of aneurism. His death was regarded as a public loss, and his funeral was attended by their Imperial Highnesses, and a large concourse of present and former students of the Lyceum. A subscription was raised, and a monument is erected to his memory.

The following is a list of such of Mr. Shaw's works as have come to our notice :

In 1836 he wrote several pieces for *The Fellow* and *Fraser's Magazine*. In 1837 he translated into verse numerous German and Latin poems, and wrote a few original poems of merit, some of which

appeared in *The Individual*. Two well-written pieces, "The Song of Hrolfkraken, the Sea King," and "The Surgeon's Song," were contributions to *Fraser's Magazine*. In 1838 and two following years he contributed several translations from the Italian to *Fraser*. In 1842 he started *The St. Petersburg Literary Review*; he also published in *Blackwood* a translation of "Anmalet Bek," a Russian novel, by Marlinski. In 1844 he published his first work of considerable length, a translation of "The Heretic," a novel in three volumes, by Lajetchnikoff. The work was well received, and an edition was immediately reprinted in New York. In the following year appeared in *Blackwood* his "Life of Poushkin," accompanied by exquisite translations of several of the finest of that poet's productions. In 1846 his leisure time was entirely occupied in writing his "Outlines of English Literature," a work expressly undertaken at the request of the authorities of the Lyceum, and for the use of the pupils of that establishment. The edition was speedily sold, and immediately reprinted in Philadelphia. In 1850 he published in the "Quarterly" an exceedingly original and curious article, entitled "Forms of Salutation."





# ENGLISH LITERATURE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

IN their literary inheritance, the readers of the English language are the richest people that the sun shines on. Their novelists paint the finest portraits of human character, their historians know the secrets of entrancing and philosophical narration, their critics have the keenest acumen, their philosophers probe far into the philosophy of mind, their poets sing the sweetest songs. But before beginning a discussion of the lives and the works of the great men who have contributed to the riches of our literature, it is well for us to remind ourselves of the long centuries of ignorance and of conflict that passed over England before her nationality and her language were developed.

The most ancient inhabitants of the British Islands were of that Celtic race which once occupied a large portion of Western Europe. They had not a respectable degree of civilization, their habits were nomadic and predatory; they neglected agriculture, and by tattooing and staining their bodies they gave infallible proof of their untutored state.

The first important intercourse between the primitive Britons and any foreign nation resulted from the invasion of

**55 B. C.]** the country by the Romans under Julius Cæsar.

The resistance of the Britons, though obstinate and ferocious, was overpowered in the first century of the Christian era by the superior skill and organization of the Roman armies. The central and southern portion of the country became a Roman province and was subject to foreign domination for about four hundred years. According to their custom, the invaders strove to introduce their laws, their habits and their civilization among the barbarous subjects. The **Celts** who yielded acquired a considerable degree of civilization; those who were unsubdued inhabited mountainous regions inaccessible to the Roman arms, and frequently descended from the rugged fastnesses in Wales and Scotland, to carry devastation over the more civilized province, and tax the skill and vigilance of the foreign soldiery. Upon the withdrawal of the Roman troops at the beginning of the fifth century, the Celts who had submitted to the yoke found themselves in a desperate position. Swarms of Scots and Picts came upon them, to reclaim the territory, and swept away every trace of civilization. Ancient Celtic legends tell of the vengeance wreaked upon the Britons who had bowed to the Roman invader.

Traces of the Celtic element in the English language are found only in the names of places, and in the titles of a few familiar objects. In the vocabulary of one hundred and four thousand words given in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, it would be difficult to find one hundred derived directly from the Celtic. That most of the words to which the lexicographer assigns a Celtic derivation were not inherited from the old Britons is proved by the fact that they are not to be found in the Anglo-Saxon. They were transplanted from the Celtic into some Romance tongue and thence were grafted into modern English. The aboriginal speech of Britain has bequeathed to us less than any other language with which our Anglo-Saxon race has been asso-

ciated. Nor did the Romans who held dominion over Britain leave many words as contributions to our speech. The multitude of our Latin derivatives, as we shall see, were brought to our language in a later century. A few geographical words in this Brito-Roman period were ineffaceably stamped upon the face of the country. They have survived invasions and revolutions, and stand amid the modern names as venerable monuments of a mysterious age. Thus the termination *don* is, in some instances, as in "London," the Celtic word "*dun*," a rock or natural fortress; the termination *caster* or *chester* is a memorial of the Roman occupation, indicating the spot of a *castrum* or fortified camp; and the last syllable of *Lincoln* indicates a Roman *colonia*.

The foundations of the laws and language of the peoples who speak the Modern English were laid between the middle of the fifth and the middle of the sixth century. Piratical adventurers, allured across the North Sea from the bleak shores of their native Jutland, Schleswig, Holstein and the coasts of the Baltic, gradually established themselves in those parts of Britain which the Romans had occupied. They also were unable to penetrate the mountainous districts of Wales and Scotland. The level and more easily accessible portion of Scotland was gradually gained by them, and their language was established there as well as in South Britain. Possessing a physical organization less powerful and enduring than that of the Teutonic invaders, and, perhaps, having an inferior moral constitution, the half-Romanized Britons gradually disappeared from the presence of the superior race. The absorption or destruction of this nation was in accordance with what seems to be an inevitable law regulating the result of the close contact of two unequal nationalities. That law is operating in our own land to-day, as it guides the North American Indians to the certain fate that must come from their contact with the same Anglo-Saxon race.

The English nation, then, had Teutonic parentage. The language spoken by the Saxon invaders was akin to the modern Dutch; and, like the people who spoke it, was vigorous, practical and imaginative. For a long time the colonization of Britain was carried on by detached Teutonic tribes. After two centuries of struggle they grouped themselves into several independent governments, collectively known as the *Heptarchy* or Seven Kingdoms.

In 827 these were all made subject to Wessex (the country of the West Saxons) and there was at last the prospect of a rapid and vigorous national development. But the union of the Anglo-Saxon tribes was hardly effected before the **Danes** invaded the country in large numbers, changed the sovereignty over much of the territory, and endeavored to subjugate the Saxons as thoroughly as the Saxons had subjugated the Celts. By the heroism and wisdom of the illustrious Alfred, this threatening catastrophe was averted. The two fierce races, nearly allied in origin, consented to an amalgamation which did not materially change the language or institutions of the country. Still, in certain localities, as in the north and east of England, and along the coast of Scotland where the Danish colonies were established, evident marks of the Scandinavian occupation are found in the idioms of the peasantry, and in the names of families and places.

**1066.]** Towards the close of the eleventh century, William the Conqueror, by his victory in the battle of Hastings, brought Englishmen under the Norman rule. The most important changes resulting from this conquest were the establishment in England of the feudal principle of the military tenure of land, the introduction of the chivalric spirit and habits, and the separation of society into two great classes, nobles and serfs. English homes were made the property of unfriendly foreigners; the generous old Saxon thane, the friend and companion of his humbler fel-

lows, was superseded by the arrogant and oppressing Norman baron.

The **Normans** who settled in England were of a mixed race. Early in the tenth century piratical Scandinavians made conquests of territory in the north of France, ultimately wrested from the degenerate sons of Charlemagne the whole of the noble province which has since borne the name of Normandy, developed the feudal system in order to hold the conquered people in subjection, and, with slight modification, adopted the French tongue. The gradual blending of these two races produced the Norman nationality. Its language was written in laws, in song, in story. Its culture was expressed in literature, in the delicacy of ornaments, in architecture, in oratory, and was far superior to that of any other European nation in the Middle Ages. Its refinement was equalled by its valor. When this cultivated people invaded and conquered England, they found their subjects illiterate, without social culture, given to coarse dissipation, and determined to treat the victors with unyielding hatred. That hatred was reciprocated. For two centuries the Norman swayed the tyrant's sceptre, the Saxon yielded unwilling homage. Nor was there any disposition to blend interests and sympathies until the Norman, exiled from Normandy, came to consider himself an Englishman, not a foreigner in possession of English soil.

But it is in the effects of the Norman Conquest upon the English language that we are interested. The speech which the Norman invaders brought to England was one of two closely related dialects of the Romance languages, and was known as the *Langue d'Oïl* in distinction from the other which was called the *Langue d'Oc*. These names were derived from their differing words for *yes*. The line of demarcation between them nearly coincided with the Loire. They were both results of the decomposition of the classical Latin. That ancient language, in the process of its decay, lost nearly

all its inflections. Its substantives and adjectives surrendered the terminations of their cases in the different declensions, and undertook to express the relations of words by the more frequent use of prepositions.

The poetry of each of the French dialects had been read and admired by the few educated people in England before the Norman Conquest. After the Conquest, the Norman *trouvères*, poets who wrote in the *Langue d'Oïl*, and the poets of the sister dialect, the *troubadours*, were held in high esteem by the Court in England. They furnished literature for the readers, and so wielded potent influence over English thought and language. They displaced the English Glee-man, crowding him into the society of the humblest people.

The character of a conquest determines its effect upon the language of the conquered. The Norman Conquest was not such as a civilized nation makes of a nation of barbarians. The subjugated people were not exterminated, nor were they diminished by considerable numbers, nor were they driven from their country. They remained upon their native soil. The change which the Conquest brought to them was merely a change in the administration of the government. They were left in possession of traditional customs and speech. With few exceptions their conversation was with each other, almost never with the foreigner who spoke a foreign language. Their Anglo-Saxon tongue remained, modified only by the abandonment of a few individual words, and by the adoption of other individual words from the speech of the conquerors.

The extent and rapidity of such modifications depended upon the numbers and social condition of the immigrants. These immigrants were the royal family, the nobility, the churchmen and the army. There was no mass of common people whose station would compel them to mingle with the despised Saxons. The royal family used the Norman speech, and continued to exert every influence in its

favor until the close of the fourteenth century. There was no attempt on the part of the king or of his household to understand the language of the subjects; the nobles, under the system of feudalism, needed not to talk with those whom they oppressed; the churchmen were satisfied with their ecclesiastical benefices without understanding the confessions of humble worshipers; and the military forces, trained to consider themselves as men placed on guard against the discontented and dangerous Englishmen, did not seek companionship with them. These circumstances were unfavorable to grand changes in the form and structure of the English language. The mutual repulsion of the two races continued for a century; then followed a century of seeming indifference; but in the third century after the Conquest the people were united by their common interest in the foreign wars of England.

In the fourteenth century the languages began to coalesce rapidly, and the English language and the English nationality were evolved from the social confusion which attended the first centuries of the Norman occupation. The language remained Germanic in its grammatical character, but it received such large accessions of French words as to change its sound when spoken, and its appearance on the page. According to Hallam, the change was brought about; 1st, by contracting or otherwise modifying the pronunciation and orthography of words; 2d, by omitting many inflections, especially of the noun, and consequently making more use of articles and auxiliaries; and, 3d, by the introduction of French derivatives.

In the first chapter of *Ivanhoe*, Walter Scott has given an illustration of the peculiar significance of the names of animals as applied by Saxons and Normans, and has shown that our language, as we speak it to-day, indicates the servitude of the Saxons. He introduces Gurth, a Saxon swineherd, and Wamba, a jester.

“‘Why, how call you those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?’ demanded Wamba.

“‘Swine, fool, swine,’ said the herd; ‘every fool knows that.’

“‘And swine is good Saxon,’ said the jester; ‘but how call you the sow when she is flayed and drawn and quartered, and hung up by the heels like a traitor?’

“‘Pork,’ answered the swine-herd.

“‘I am very glad every fool knows that, too,’ said Wamba, ‘and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman, and is called pork, when she is carried to the castle-hall to feast among the nobles; what dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?’

“‘It is but too true doctrine, friend Wamba, however it got into a fool’s pate!’

“‘Now I can tell you more,’ said Wamba, in the same tone; ‘there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment.’”

The fusion of the Norman and Saxon languages was not effected until the fourteenth century. From that time until the present, our English speech has been extending its vocabulary, casting off local and dialectic peculiarities, abandoning old inflections, and more thoroughly blending its component elements. But, despite the influence of language upon national character and the destructive processes of time, the English people have preserved two distinct types of character. The Norman’s adherence to the laws of caste and his conservatism are still displayed by the aristocracy of England; while the democratic spirit of the old Saxon is seen in the open-hearted hospitality of the English commoner and in his resolute ambition to obtain the fullest rights of citizenship for all.



# A CHART OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE

## DISCUSSED IN THIS VOLUME.

---

<p>OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE.</p>	<p>POETRY. { Beowulf, Caedmon's Paraphrase of the Psalms.</p> <p>PROSE WRITERS. { King Alfred, The Venerable Bede, Asser.</p>
<p>MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE.</p>	<p>POETS. { Layamon, Orin, <i>or</i> Ormin, Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langlande, John Gower, Thomas Occleve, John Lydgate, James I of Scotland, The old Ballad Writers.</p> <p>PROSE WRITERS. { Sir John Mandeville, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Wycliffe, William Caxton, The Writers of the Paston Letters.</p>
<p>MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE.</p>	<p>POETS. { Of the first half of the 16th Century. { John Skelton, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, The non-dramatic Elizabethan Poets. The Elizabethan Dramatists, The Metaphysical Poets, John Milton, Samuel Butler, John Dryden, The Corrupt Dramatists, The Artificial Poets of the 18th Century, The first Romantic Poets, Walter Scott, Byron, Moore, Shelley, Keats, Campbell, Hunt, and Landor, The Lake School.</p> <p>PROSE WRITERS. { Of the first half of the 16th Century. { Sir Thomas More, Lord Berners, Roger Ascham, William Tyndale. Of the Elizabethan Age, Theological Writers of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, The Literature of the Restoration, The Philosophers and Theologians of Locke's time, Prose Writers of the first half of the 18th Century, The first Great Novelists, The first Great Historians, Ethical, Political, and Theological Writers of the latter half of the 18th Century, The Literary Impostors of the 18th Century. The Modern Novelists, The Modern Historians and Essayists.</p>

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

CLINICAL REPORTS

DEPARTMENTS

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## CHAPTER II.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

FOR more than fourteen centuries the thoughts and feelings of the English people have found expression in the same language which we now speak. The rude dialects that were brought to Britain by our forefathers, though differing in many particulars, were like the modern English in all essential respects. This venerable language has undergone many changes and modifications, has been affected by strong foreign influences, has stripped itself of many of its inflections, has acquired a vast vocabulary, has passed from youth to maturity. Between its youth and its maturity there has been wonderful growth, but the identity remains. The modern English is the Anglo-Saxon developed.

It is customary to use the terms "Anglo-Saxon," "Semi-Saxon," and "English," to designate three periods in the history of our language; but as the use of the first two of these terms might tempt us to think that we are considering a foreign language and literature, when we are considering merely the old fashions of our own speech, we shall do well to avoid the temptation by adopting the following form of division:

1. **The Old English**, from the dawn of the language until 1154.
2. **The Middle English**, from 1154 until about 1500.
3. **The Modern English**, from about 1500 to the present time.

It cannot be incorrect to apply the term "English" to even the first of these periods, for the renowned King Alfred, writing in the ninth century, uses that very term in describing his language.\* The old English was highly inflected in its grammar, and had few words adopted from foreign languages. The middle English is the name we give to that period of transition in which the speech of

\* Ælfred Kyning was wealhstod thisse bec, and hie of boclædene on *Englisc* wende. "Ælfred King was commentator of this book, and it from book-language into English turned."

the Normans was exerting its influence upon our language. During this period a few complicated forms of grammatical structure were abandoned, and the vocabulary was largely increased.

In the modern English the changes have been slight. The printing-press has stereotyped the language.

### OLD ENGLISH POETRY.

No other spoken language of modern Europe has a literature as ancient as the English. Its earliest extant writing is an epic poem of more than six thousand lines, entitled **Beowulf**. The scene of its action indicates that it was composed by Saxons who had not yet invaded England, though a few scholars attempt to give the poem an English birth-place in the county of Durham.

In their primitive home, when the banqueting-hall (the "mead-bench") was filled, the *gleeman* stirred the courage of his listeners by the recital of the superhuman deeds of the mighty Beowulf. As the story runs, King Hrothgar and his chosen subjects were wont to sit in his great hall listening to music, and drinking for their pleasure; but their pleasure was disturbed by their fear of Grendel, a grim and terrible giant, who dwelt in the neighboring marshes of Jutland. This monster would come into the palace at times to see "how the doughty Danes found themselves after their beer-carouse." On the occasion of his first visit he slew thirty sleeping men. For twelve years he was the terror of the land. At last the pitiful story came to the ears of Beowulf, a viking who was noted for his victories over the giants of the deep. He resolved to go to the relief of Hrothgar. Entering the haunted hall, he promised to fight the monster. When the mists of the night arose, Grendel came, and commenced a ferocious assault upon a sleeping man. Beowulf faced him, fought him valiantly, and wounded him so that he died. Then there was great rejoicing. But the joy was soon dispelled, for the mother of the monster came to seek revenge. Beowulf pursued her into deep, dark waters, where he was seized and dragged to the bottom of her cave; but he was able to let her soul out of its bone-house ("ban-hus").

A description of this poem is comparatively uninteresting and valueless without an illustration of its quaint thought and its

terse expression. We will look at a short extract from the condensed and modernized version found in *Morley's English Writers*.\*

"Then came from the moor under the misty hills, Grendel stalking: the wicked spoiler meant in the lofty hall to snare one of mankind. He strode under the clouds until he saw the wine-house, golden hall of men. Came then faring to the house the joyless man, he rushed straight on the door, fast with fire-hardened hands, struck with his hands, dragged open the hall's mouth: quickly then trod the fiend on the stained floor, went wroth of mood, and from his eyes stood forth a loathsome light, likest to flame. He saw in the house many war-men sleeping all together, then was his mood laughter. Hope of a sweet glut had arisen in him. But it was not for him after that night to eat more of mankind. The wretched wight seized quickly a sleeping warrior, slit him unawares, bit his bone-locker, drank his blood, in morsels swallowed him: soon had he all eaten, feet and fingers. Nearer forth he stept, laid hands upon the doughty-minded warrior at his rest, but Beowulf reached forth a hand and hung upon his arm. Soon as the evil-doer felt that there was not in mid-earth a stronger hand-grip, he became fearful in heart. Not for that could he escape the sooner, though his mind was bent on flight. He would flee into his den, seek the pack of devils; his trial there was such as in his life-days he had never before found. The hall thundered, the ale of all the Danes and earls was spilt. Angry, fierce were the strong fighters, the hall was full of the din. It was great wonder that the wine-hall stood above the warlike beasts, that the fair earth-home fell not to the ground. But within and without it was fast with iron bands cunningly forged. Over the North Danes stood dire fear, on every one of those who heard the gruesome whoop. The friend of earls held fast the deadly guest, would not leave him while living. Then drew a warrior of Beowulf an old sword of his father's for help of his lord. The sons of strife sought then to hew on every side, they knew not that no war-blade would cut into the wicked scather; but Beowulf had foresworn every edge. Hygelac's proud kinsman had the foe of God in hand. The fell wretch bore pain, a deadly wound gaped on his shoulder, the sinews sprang asunder, the bone-locker burst, to Beowulf was war-strength given. Grendel fled away death-sick, to seek a sad dwelling under the fen shelters; his life's end was come."

When Hrothgar died, the hero of the poem ascended the throne; and after an adventurous reign of fifty years, he died from wounds received in slaying a terrible fire-fiend.

This, the most ancient and the most interesting of the old English poems, is full of the superstitions of heathen times, and yet

it presents a character instinct with chivalry and generosity. It is the picture of "an age brave, generous, right-principled." Many strange but forcible compound words, many highly imaginative metaphors, and *five* similes are found in this venerable poem. It is supposed to be allegorical, the monster representing a poisonous exhalation from the marshes. If the supposition be a correct one, this literary relic displays the predilection of our ancestors for allegorical expression.

Although the action of this heroic story was not later than the beginning of the sixth century, the only MS. which has preserved the narrative for us was written not earlier than the close of the tenth century. This most valuable of English records, now kept in the British Museum, was the work of a monk who wrote it from dictation. The writing is continuous, resembling our manuscript of prose. There is no mechanical separation of verses; nor is there any rhyming, for rhyme was an adornment unknown in English poetry, until after the Norman Conquest. But in this, and in all other Old-English (Anglo-Saxon) poems, a rude alliteration is found, which is explained in the discussion of "The Vision of Piers Plowman."

The next important poem demanding attention in this period of our literature is free from the pagan sentiments of Beowulf. It was written about two centuries after the Angles and Saxons began their invasion of England. By that time they had been won to the Christian faith, and were ready to receive with gladness a poetical versification of passages from the Bible, by which

the sacred teachings could be more easily remembered,

**Died 680.]** and more entertainingly diffused. A monk named

**Caedmon** (Kǣd'mon), was the first Englishman who

has left us poetry inspired by the chaste beauties of Christian sentiment, and he was the author of such a *Metrical Paraphrase of the Scriptures*. Connected with his work, we have one of the most interesting traditions found in English literature. He was an ignorant, and a very devout man. Sitting, one evening, with a company of rustics, who were whiling away the time by singing and by recitation, his ignorance compelled him to be silent when it was his turn to help on the entertainment. Bemoaning his stupidity, "he left the house of festivity, went out to the stables of the

beasts, whose custody on that night was intrusted to him ;" and there in his restless sleep a strange figure appeared to him and bade him sing. "I cannot sing," said Caedmon ; "I have come out hither from the feast because I could not sing." Then he who spoke to him said, "But you have to sing to me." "What must I sing?" asked Caedmon ; and the voice replied, "Sing the origin of creatures." At once an inspiration came to the ignorant peasant, and the words of his song lingered in his memory when he awoke. Gifts of poesy were continued to him. The people of the neighboring monastery pronounced his new endowment a miracle, called him a favored child of heaven, received him into their order, and ever treated him with deference.

Such is the tradition. The marvelous story may have been told for the purpose of winning the reverent esteem of the people for Caedmon's teachings. But without the story he would have been eminent among men. His work exerted an extraordinary influence upon the national modes of thought, and won for him the deep reverence of five centuries of Englishmen.

It has been maintained that this great religious poet of the Anglo-Saxons suggested to Milton the subject of his renowned epic. That Milton must have read Caedmon with great interest seems probable, in view of the fact that the MS. of Caedmon, discovered in 1654, was first published in 1655, and that it discussed the Fall of Man, the very subject upon which Milton's imagination was at work. Both describe wicked angels, their expulsion from heaven, their descent into hell, and the creation of the world. In Satan's soliloquy in Hell we find a passage (others might be cited), in which the great English epic poet of the seventeenth century uses thoughts closely resembling those that were written by the monk of the seventh century.

These poems of the Old English period, one produced while our ancestors were yet in paganism, the other after they had accepted Christianity, are the only extended works in verse which have been preserved. The shorter poems are not numerous. Fragments of verse and two or three unbroken passages are found amid the prose of the Saxon Chronicle. They are always spirited, but serious. They are the utterances of a people who, though unaccustomed to give vent to their feelings, yet, when excited by some great occasion, expressed themselves with earnest solemnity.

They never show us the sparkle of lyric verse,—the national character was not adapted to its production.

### OLD ENGLISH PROSE.

**B. 849.]** The honored name of **King Alfred** stands pre-eminent among the writers of prose in Old English. No sooner had he effected the deliverance of his people from their Danish enemies, than he eagerly set to work to lift them out of their bondage to ignorance. From various quarters, he invited men of learning to his court. He strove to secure the higher education of the clergy. What he could do, he did, to restore the literary work that had been destroyed when the Danes burned English monasteries. In order to diffuse knowledge, he had the standard writings on religion, morals, geography, and history, translated into the language of the people. But he not only gave patronage to learning, he also gave his most earnest personal efforts in contributing to the national literature. At a time of life when the task must have been irksome enough, he applied himself to a careful course of training in order to prepare himself for the work of a writer. By these means his patriotic desires, to a great extent, were realized; and, while he succeeded in elevating his country, he won for himself a lofty place among royal authors.

King Alfred's chief works were translations of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Ancient History of Orosius*, and Boethius *On the Consolations Afforded by Philosophy*. But he was something more than a mere translator. He dealt fairly with the text of an author, cutting away redundancies, or making additions, as he saw fit, and writing such elaborate prefaces, that the new matter introduced by way of comment or illustration, entitles him to be called an original author. His writings are pronounced "the purest specimens of Anglo-Saxon prose."

It is reasonable to suppose, that the patronage and the example of the great king must have induced the writing of many works in the native language; but time has spared us very few of them. One grand monument of prose literature, the **Saxon Chronicle** still remains. It exists in seven separate forms, each named from the monastery in which it was completed. The usual unauthentic account of this work is that it was originally composed at the sug-



gestion of King Alfred, and, beginning with the arrival of Julius Cæsar in Britain, was brought down to the year 891, and that from that time it was continued as a contemporary record until the accession of Henry II., in 1154. This chronicle is exceedingly interesting, as it is the first ever written in Teutonic prose, and is also most valuable, since it furnishes trustworthy statements concerning the early history of the English people.

At the beginning, the work is crude, meagre in its details, and altogether devoid of the qualities we expect to find in an elaborate historical narration; but as the record draws towards its close, the chroniclers occasionally rise into sustained descriptions, display vigor of style and a sober eloquence. "Putting aside the Hebrew annals, there is not anywhere known a series of early vernacular histories comparable to the Saxon Chronicles." Their close marks the close of the old language as well as of the old literature; for before the chronicler had thrown down his pen, he had begun to confuse his grammar and to corrupt his vocabulary.

The literature thus far referred to was written for the amusement or instruction of comparatively ignorant people; much of it was intended for recital to those who could not read. But there were monks in England who were studying and writing in Latin, then the only language of the republic of learning. During the first five or six centuries of England's history, her most highly cultivated men were contributing to the well-stocked literature of Rome, and were withholding the fruits of their mental toil from the literature of their own nation. Two of these writers of Latin, Bede and Asser, by discussing subjects connected with the history of England, have bequeathed to us most valuable infor-

**B. 673.]** mation.

**D. 735.]** **Bede**, surnamed the Venerable, was placed in his monastery when seven years of age. The rest of his biography is contained in the following brief passage, translated from one of his works :

"Spending all the remaining time of my life in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of Scripture, and amidst the observance of regular discipline, and the daily care of singing in the church, I always took delight in learning, teaching and writing. In the nineteenth year of my age I received deacon's orders; in the thirtieth, those of the priesthood, \* \* \* from which time till

the fifty-ninth year of my age I have made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to compile out of the works of the venerable fathers, and to interpret and explain, according to their meaning, these following pieces."

The enumeration itself is startlingly voluminous. "His writings form almost an encyclopædia of the knowledge of his day." But it is by one work that he has made the English nation a lasting debtor to his fame; for his *Ecclesiastical History of the English* was a history of England, and was for centuries the only source of knowledge in matters relating to the nation's early career. Written for the purpose of preserving among the Angles and Saxons the memory of their conversion to the Christian faith, it told them, also, the story of their political life. In careful and successful research, in arrangement of materials, and in felicity of style, he rises far above all Gothic historians of that age.

**Asser**, a devout bishop, was the friend and counsellor **D. 910.]** of Alfred. He is supposed to have been the author of an extant biography of the king. This work is of great interest, but its authenticity has been fiercely disputed. Although strong arguments are brought forward against its reliableness, still the probability is that the book contains substantial truth, and that it was written in 893. It tells the simple and romantic story of the king's life; pictures his youth, his manhood, his character; narrates the incidents which show his love and care for his subjects; shows us the organization of the government, and incidentally displays the state of civilization in that day. The present popular opinions of the reign of Alfred, and all the deeds ascribed to him—save a few distortions of tradition—are derived from the records of Asser.

**NOTE.**—For extended reading upon the topics discussed in this chapter, the student is referred to Wright's *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, Morley's *English Writers*, Guest's *History of English Rhythms*, Conybeare's *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Thorpe's edition of *Cædmon*, Craik's *English Literature and Language*, and Taine's *English Literature*.

## CHAPTER III.

### FROM THE CONQUEST TO GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

FOR more than a century after the Norman Conquest, English Literature was utterly inert. That event, so fatal to the native aristocracy, seemed at first to have swept away in common ruin the laws, language, and arts of the English people, and to have blotted out England from the muster-roll of the nations. A foreign king and aristocracy, an alien language and literature, ruled in the land; the old speech was no longer heard in the halls of the great, native genius no longer strove to utter itself in the native tongue; and the voice of the English nation seemed stilled forever. But it was not the stillness of death; in a few generations signs of returning life began to show themselves; and the English nation emerged from the fiery trial, with its equipment of language, laws and literature, materially altered indeed, and perhaps improved, but still bearing the ineffaceable Teutonic stamp. The national life was not annihilated at Senlac; it was but suspended for a time.

In the old English, as in other Teutonic languages, there was a tendency to shake off the complicated inflections that fettered free utterance. This tendency existed before the Norman Conquest. That great political revolution but gave it an additional impulse. The vernacular speech was driven from literature for a time, and found its refuge in the cottages of ignorant people. No longer fixed by use in literature, and exposed to many disturbing influences, it fell into disorder. The processes of change were thereby accelerated, and when, at the middle of the twelfth century, this speech rose to the surface once more, it had traveled much farther on its prescribed course, than it would have done had it been left

to itself. Still it was the old tongue. In the words of Max Müller, "not a single drop of foreign blood has entered into the organic system of the English language. The Grammar, the blood and the soul of the language, is as pure and unmixed in English as spoken in the British Isles, as it was when spoken on the shores of the German Ocean by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes of the continent." \*

This, the Middle English Stage, may be called the revolutionary period of the language, during which it was in a state of apparently hopeless disorganization. There was a general breaking up of the old grammatical system; uncertainty, confusion, and fluctuation prevailed everywhere. The Northern, the Midland, and the Southern dialects, each with certain peculiar inflectional forms, and each represented by literary works of some note, struggled for the mastery. The influx of French words too, though trifling at first, had already begun; and for the next three centuries the process went on with increasing rapidity. Still there was a general movement towards simplification and stability; each century brought the language nearer to modern English.

The interest of the writings which will form the subject of this chapter is almost exclusively philological and historical. Their literary merits are small; but they supply the means of tracing the course of the language through its many varying forms, and, occasionally, they throw a powerful light on the feelings and aspirations, the political and social condition of the people. We shall give them but a passing glance.

If we except a few fragments of verse—the *Hymn of St. Godrie*, the *Ely Song of King Canute*, *The Here Prophecy*, none of them exceeding eight lines in length—the first to break the long silence was Layamon, author of the *Brut*. According to his own account he was a priest. He must have been a gentle, pious, patriotic man, and a lover of tradition. His work, written early in the thirteenth century, is a chronicle of Britain, and is mainly a translation from the French of the *Brut d'Angleterre*; but Layamon has introduced so much new matter into his work, and has made it so conversational in style, that it is more than double the length of the original. It is a free narration in verse of Celtic traditions which had been

\* "Lectures on the Science of Language," 1st series, p. 81. Amer. Edition.

preserved in France and in parts of England. The story makes Brutus, a son of the Trojan Aeneas, the founder of the line of British Monarchs. The style of the work bears witness to Norman influence, but not to so great an extent as might have been expected from the translator of a French original. The fact that it was written for the common people of a rural district was favorable to the use of simple English, and makes it a valuable illustration of the state of our language at that time. Written at least one hundred and fifty years after the Norman Conquest, it is, nevertheless, a specimen of almost pure Saxon. The old text has not fifty words taken from the French. The foreign influence, however, appears in the occasional use of Norman rhymes amid the Saxon alliterative versification.

The *Ormulum* is another monument of our old literature, and is supposed to have been written in the thirteenth century. One of its editors describes it as "a series of homilies in an imperfect state, composed in metre, without alliteration, and, except in very few cases, without rhyme: the subject of the homilies being supplied by those portions of the New Testament which were read in the daily services of the church." The author himself says, "If any one wants to know why I have done this deed, why I have turned into English the Gospel's holy teaching; I have done it in order that all young Christian folks may depend upon that only, that they with their whole might follow aright the Gospel's holy teaching in thought, in word, in deed." The text reads more easily than Layamon's *Brut*, and that fact, together with many peculiarities of structure, indicates that the work is more recent. At the time of its writing, the conflict of languages and dialects in England was going on, and the people made sad work in their attempts to pronounce each other's speech. In order to save his verses from abuses of mispronunciation, ORM, or **Ormin**, adopted an ingenious use of consonants as a key to the sounds of vowels. After every short vowel the consonant was doubled, and the reader, of whatever speech he might be, was left with no excuse for marring the sound of the verse. A single couplet will illustrate:

"Thiss boc iss nemmed Ormulum,  
Forrthi that Orm itt wrohhte."

This book is called Ormulum. because Orm wrote it.

In this age the average literary taste craved the narration of romance in song. It was native to the French; but English writers, in considerable numbers, sought their laurels in this kind of composition. The stories, originally written in the French, full of love and adventure, were vital with the spirit of chivalry. Professional minstrels, knights, and even kings had vied in their composition. They had a tendency to group themselves about great names, some having Alexander, some Charlemagne as their central figure; but one cluster, the Arthurian, is of genuine native growth, and this one happens to possess the highest interest of them all. Translations and imitations of these French romances slowly came into popular favor with the English people, and aided in the fusion of the languages.

But the patriotic spirit of the common people was not fully satisfied in imitating foreign poesy. Many spirited political songs of English origin, and ballads full of characteristic English satire were written. One of these ballads, the *Owl and the Nightingale*, in giving an amusing account of a competition in song between the two birds, furnishes perhaps the finest specimen of the popular literature of the thirteenth century, and is specially interesting as the earliest narrative and imaginative English poem not copied from some foreign model.

Writings in English do not represent the entire intellectual wealth of the nation during this Anglo-Norman period; indeed they form but a small portion. For almost three centuries after the Conquest, French continued to be the language of polite literature, and Latin the language of theology, philosophy, science and history. In these departments many Englishmen were writing; but they were contributors to a foreign, not to their national literature.

That national literature has now reached the eve of its first great expansion. It has been in existence for a thousand years, but has as yet produced no work of pre-eminent merit, no name that is entitled to rank among intellects of the highest order. Energy of thought and expression, natural sweetness and simple pathos, are not wanting; but there is still a complete absence of artistic form, literary skill, and the higher qualities of workmanship. Nothing appears to portend the magnificent outburst that is at

hand; but the student of history can discern forces, political, social, and spiritual, at work beneath the smooth surface, destined within a few years to produce momentous results. The national life and thought of England are now passing through a quickening process; a brilliant page in her history is about to open, on which will appear many bright names, but none brighter than that of GEOFFREY CHAUCER, the first man who speaks to the hearts of *all* classes of the English people.

## CHAPTER IV.

### GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

"I consider Chaucer as a genial day in an English spring."—*Thomas Warton.*

"I take increasing delight in Chaucer. \* \* \* How exquisitely tender he is, yet how perfectly free he is from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping."—*S. T. Coleridge.*

"Here was a healthy and hearty man, so genuine that he need not ask whether he were genuine or no, so sincere as quite to forget his own sincerity, so truly pious that he could be happy in the best world that God chose to make, so human that he loved even the foibles of his kind."

"There is no touch of cynicism in all he wrote."—*J. R. Lowell.*

THE fourteenth century is the most important epoch in the intellectual history of Europe. It is the point of contact between two widely-differing eras in the social, religious, and political annals of our race. Feudalism and chivalry had fulfilled their mission, and were yielding to the pressure of ideas that betokened the oncoming of the Revival of Letters and the Protestant Reformation. Of this great transition from the old order to the new, the personal career and the works of **Chaucer**, the first great English poet, "the Father of English Poetry," furnish us with the most exact type and expression; for, like all men of the highest order of genius, he at once followed and directed the intellectual tendencies of his age, and was himself the "abstract and brief chronicle" of the spirit of his time. In the age in which he lived he was eminently happy; the magnificent court of Edward III. had carried the splendor of chivalry to the height of its development; the victories of Sluys, of Crécy, and Poitiers, by exciting the national



pride, tended to fuse into one vigorous nationality the two elements which formed the English people and the English language. The literature, too, abundant in quantity, if not remarkable for much originality of form, was rapidly taking a purely English tone; the rhyming chronicles and legendary romances were either translated into, or originally composed in, the vernacular language.

The date of Chaucer's birth is uncertain. **B. 1328.]** There are reasons for fixing it at 1328, and yet **D. 1400.]** others in favor of 1340. He is supposed to have been a child of wealth. His surname, the French *Chaussier*, points to a Continental origin, which at that time was almost a sure sign of aristocratic rank. He was "armed a knight," he held lucrative and responsible positions, he married one of the Queen's maids of honor. These facts indicate that he belonged to the higher classes of English society. But whatever his social position may have been, his spirit was tolerant and generous, he took broad views of life, and, having the soul of a true poet, he loved nature and humanity.

In the *Testament of Love*, Chaucer speaks of London as his birth-place. In his *Court of Love* he speaks of himself under the name and character of "Philogenet—of Cambridge, Clerk;" but this hardly proves that he was educated at Cambridge. During the years 1356–9 he was in the service of the wife of the Duke of Clarence, probably as page. He was taken prisoner by the French in 1359, and being ransomed, according to the custom of those times, was enabled to return to England in 1360.

He next appears, in 1367, as one of the "valets of the king's chamber," and writs are addressed to him as "*dilectus palettus noster*." His official career was active and even distinguished; during a long period, he enjoyed various profitable offices, having been for twelve years comptroller of the customs and subsidy of wools, skins, and

tanned hides in the port of London; and he seems also to have been occasionally employed in diplomatic negotiations. Thus he was, in 1373, associated with two citizens of Genoa in a commission to Italy. On this occasion he is supposed to have made the acquaintance of Petrarch, then the most illustrious man of letters in Europe. Partly in consequence of his marriage with a sister of the wife of John of Gaunt, and partly perhaps from sharing in some of the political and religious opinions of that powerful prince, Chaucer was identified, to a considerable degree, with the household and with the party of the Duke of Lancaster. His *Complaynte of the Blacke Knight*, his *Dream*, and his *Boke of the Duchesse* were suggested to him, the first by the courtship of the duke and the duchess Blanche, the second by their marriage, and the third by her death in 1369. In the *Dream*, allusions to Chaucer's own courtship and marriage may be found. One of the most interesting particulars of his life was his election as representative for Kent in the Parliament of 1386. In the political turmoil of this year he lost all his offices, and fled from England. After a brief exile he returned; and if there be any truth in the notion that the *Testament of Love* is an allegorical description of a chapter in the poet's own life, he was obliged to submit to the bitter humiliation of imprisonment.

In 1389, however, he was appointed to the office of clerk of the king's works, which he held for about two years. There is reason to believe that, though his pecuniary circumstances must have been, during a great part of his life, in proportion to the position he occupied in the state and in society, his last days were more or less clouded by embarrassment. His death took place at Westminster on the 25th of October, 1400.

An ancient and probably authentic portrait of Chaucer, attributed to his contemporary and fellow-poet, Occleve, as

well as a curious and beautiful miniature, introduced, according to the fashion of those times, into one of the most valuable manuscript copies of his works, give this great poet a pleasing and meditative countenance, and indicate that he was somewhat corpulent. In the prologue to *The Rime of Sir Thopas*, the host of the Tabard, himself represented as a "large man," and a "faire burgess," calls upon Chaucer in his turn to contribute a story to the amusement of the pilgrims, and rallies him on his corpulency, as well as on his studious and abstracted air :

"What man art thou?" quod he;  
 "Thou lokest as thou woldest fynde an hare;  
 For ever on the ground I se the stare.  
 Approche nere, and loke merrily.  
 Now ware you, sires, and let this man have space.  
 He in the wast is schape as well as I:  
 He semeth elvish by his countenance,  
 For unto no wight doth he daliaunce."

The literary and intellectual career of Chaucer divides itself into two periods, closely corresponding to the two great social and political tendencies which meet in the fourteenth century. His earlier productions bear the stamp of the Chivalric, his later and more original creations, of the Italian literature. It is more than probable that the poet's visits to Italy, then the fountain of new literary life, brought him into contact with the works and the men by whose example the change in the taste of Europe was brought about. The religious element, too, enters largely into the character of his writings, though it is difficult to ascertain how far the poet sympathized with the bold doctrines of Wycliffe, who, like himself, was favored and protected by John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III. Many satirical passages in his poems indicate that in hostility to the monastic orders and in contempt for corrupt men in the church, he heartily sympathized with Wycliffe;

but he probably did not accept the theological opinions of the man who was then considered the arch-heretic.

Eight of the longer works which compose the voluminous collection of Chaucer's poetry, are to be ascribed to a direct or indirect imitation of purely Romance models, while three fall naturally under the category of the Italian or Renaissance type. Of the former class the principal are the *Romaunt of the Rose*, the *Court of Love*, the *Assembly of Fowls*, the *Cuckow and the Nightingale*, the *Flower and the Leaf*, *Chaucer's Dream*, the *Boke of the Duchesse*, and the *House of Fame*. Under the latter we must range the *Legende of Goode Women*, *Troilus and Creseide*, *Anelyda and Arcyte*, and above all the *Canterbury Tales*.

The *Romaunt of the Rose* is a translation of the famous French allegory, *Le Roman de la Rose*, the earliest monument of French literature in the thirteenth century. The original is of inordinate length, containing twenty-two thousand verses, even in the unfinished state in which it was left. According to the almost universal practice of the old Romance poets, the story is put into the form of a dream or vision. Lover, the hero, is alternately aided and hindered in his undertakings by a multitude of beneficent and malignant personages. His most romantic undertaking, the culling of an enchanted rose, gives a name to the poem. Chaucer's translation, in the octosyllabic Trouvère measure of the original, consists of seven thousand, six hundred and ninety-nine verses. The portions omitted either never were translated by the English poet on account of his dislike of their immoral and irreligious tendency, or were left out by the copyist from the early English manuscripts. The translation gives proof of Chaucer's remarkable ear for metrical harmony, and also of his picturesque imagination; for though in many places he follows the original with scrupulous fidelity, he not unfrequently adds vigorous touches of his own. The most remarkable illustration of

this is the description of the character of a true gentleman, not a hint of which can be found in the original.\*

The *Court of Love* is written in the name of "Philogenet of Cambridge," clerk (or student), who is directed by Mercury to appear at the Court of Venus. The above designation has induced some critics to suppose that the poet meant to indicate that he had studied at Cambridge. He gives a description of the Castle of Love, where Admetus and Alcestis preside as king and queen. Philogenet is conducted to the Temple, sees Venus and Cupid, and hears the oath of allegiance and obedience to the twenty commandments of Love administered to the faithful. The hero is then presented to the Lady Rosial, with whom, in strict accordance with Provençal poetical custom, he has become enamoured in a dream. The most curious part of the poem is the celebration of the grand festival of Love, on May-day, when an exact parody of the Catholic matin service for Trinity Sunday is chanted by various birds in honor of the God of Love.

In the *Assembly of Fowls* we have a debate carried on before the Parliament of Birds, to decide the claims of three eagles to the possession of a beautiful *formel* (female, or hen), by which the Lady Blanche of Lancaster is probably intended.

The *Cuckow and the Nightingale*, though of no great length, is one of the most charming among this class of Chaucer's productions: it describes a controversy between the two birds. To the poets and allegorists of the Middle Ages, the Cuckoo was the emblem of profligate celibacy, while the Nightingale was the type of constant and virtuous conjugal love. In this poem we meet with a striking example of that exquisite sensibility to the sweetness of external nature, and in particular to the song of birds, which was pos-

\* Lines 2197-2274.

essed by Chaucer in a higher degree, perhaps, than by any other poet in the world.\*

The *Flower and the Leaf* is an allegory, probably written to celebrate the marriage of Philippa, John of Gaunt's daughter, with John, king of Portugal. A lady, unable to sleep, wanders out into a forest, on a spring morning, and seating herself in a delightful arbor, listens to the alternate songs of the goldfinch and the nightingale. Her reverie is suddenly interrupted by the approach of a band of ladies clothed in white, and garlanded with laurel and woodbine. They accompany their queen in singing a roundelay, and are in their turn interrupted by the sound of trumpets and by the appearance of nine armed knights, followed by a splendid train of cavaliers and ladies. These joust for an hour, and then advancing to the first company, each knight leads a lady to a laurel, to which they make an obeisance. Another troop of ladies approaches, habited in green, and doing reverence to a tuft of flowers, while the leader sings a pastoral song, in honor of the daisy. The sports are broken off, first by the heat of the sun, which withers all the flowers, and afterwards by a violent storm, in which the knights and the ladies in green are pitifully drenched; while the company in white shelter themselves under the laurel. Then follows the explanation of the allegory: the white queen and her party represent Chastity; the knights, the Nine Worthies; the cavaliers crowned with laurel, the Knights of the Round Table, the Peers of Charlemagne, and the Knights of the Garter. The Queen and ladies in green represent Flora and the followers of sloth and idleness. In general, the flower typifies vain pleasure; the leaf, virtue and industry; the former being "a thing fading with every blast," while the latter "abides with the root, notwithstanding the frosts and winter storms." The

\* See the inimitable passage from line 65 to 83.

poem is written in the seven-lined stanza, and contains many curious and beautiful passages.

- For its extraordinary union of brilliant description with learning and humor, the *House of Fame* is sufficient of itself to establish Chaucer's reputation. Under the popular form of a dream or vision, it gives us a vivid and striking picture of the Temple of Glory, crowded with aspirants for immortal renown, and adorned with myriad statues of great poets and historians. The description of this temple is the most interesting part of the poem. Its architectural details are carefully set forth, and its charms are charmingly described. In richness of fancy it far surpasses Pope's imitation, the *Temple of Fame*. When the poet leaves the temple, he is, in his dream, borne away by an eagle to a house sixty miles in length, built of twigs, and blown about in the wind. This is the House of Rumor, thronged with pilgrims, pardoners, sailors, and other retailers of wonderful reports.

" And eke this hous hath of entrees  
As fell of leves as ben on trees,  
In somer when they grene ben,  
And on the rove men may yet seen  
A thousand holes, and wel moo  
To leten wel the sounne oute goo."

The *Legende of Goode Women* was one of Chaucer's latest compositions. Its apologies for what had been written in his earlier years, and its mention of many of his previous works, clearly prove that it was produced after much of his busy life was spent. The avowed purpose of the poem is to make a retraction of his unfavorable descriptions of the character of women; and for this purpose he undertakes to give a poetical sketch of nineteen ladies, whose lives of chastity and worthiness redeem the sex from his former reproaches. The work was left incomplete. The nine sketches given are closely translated from Ovid, but the coloring of the stories is Catholic and mediæval. Dido, Cleopa-

tra and Medea are regarded as the martyrs of Saint Venus and Saint Cupid. Many striking original descriptions are introduced by Chaucer. The Prologue is by far the finest portion of the poem. Here, and everywhere in Chaucer, the rhythm is perfect when the verses are properly read, and there is a display of his command of the resources of the English language. Among the blemishes of this poem Warton has pointed out several amusing anachronisms.

The generations contemporary with and succeeding the age of Chaucer placed his *Troilus and Creseide* nearest to the *Canterbury Tales*. The materials for this poem were drawn from Boccaccio. The story was common, and extremely popular in the Middle Ages, and even later. Shakespeare himself dramatized it. In many passages Chaucer adhered closely to the text of Boccaccio, and he adopted the musical Italian stanza of seven lines; but in the conduct of the story, in the development of noble, ideal characters, and in a delicate appreciation of moral sentiment, he was far superior to his Italian contemporary.

✓ Chaucer's greatest and most original work is, beyond all question, the *Canterbury Tales* (13). It is in this that he has poured forth in inexhaustible abundance his stores of wit, humor, pathos, and knowledge of humanity: it is this which will place him, till the remotest posterity, in the first rank among poets and character-painters. An exact portraiture of the language and manners of society in a remote age could not fail of awakening deep interest, even if executed by an inferior hand. How great, then, may be our delight when the magical power of a poet evokes our ancestors from the fourteenth century, and causes them to pass before our vision "in their habit, as they lived," acting and speaking in a manner invariably true to general nature.

The plan of the *Canterbury Tales*, though very simple, is masterly. It enables the poet to make the representatives



of various classes of society tell a series of tales, extremely beautiful when regarded as compositions and judged on their independent merits, but deriving an infinitely higher interest from the way in which they harmonize with their respective narrators. After giving a brief, picturesque description of spring, the poet informs us that being about to make a pilgrimage from London to the shrine of Thomas à Becket in the cathedral of Canterbury, he passes the night previous to his departure at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. While at the "hostelrie" he meets many pilgrims bound to the same destination :—

" In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,  
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
 To Canterbury with ful devout corage,  
 At night was come into that hostelrie  
 Wel nyne and twenty in a companye\*  
 Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle  
 In felawschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,  
 That toward Canterbury wolden ryde."

This goodly company, assembled in a manner so natural in those times of pilgrimages and of difficult and dangerous roads, agree to travel in a body ; and at supper Harry Bailey, the host of the Tabard, a jolly and sociable fellow, proposes to accompany the party as a guide, and suggests that they may much enliven the tedium of their journey by relating stories as they ride. He is accepted by the whole society as a judge or moderator, by whose decisions every one is to abide. The plan of the whole work, had Chaucer completed it, would have comprised the adventures on the journey, the arrival at Canterbury, a description, in all probability, of the splendid religious ceremonies and the visits to the numerous shrines and relics in the Cathedral, the return to London, the farewell supper at the Tabard, and the separation of the pleasant company. The jovial guide proposes

\* But in his subsequent enumeration (see next page) Chaucer counts thirty persons.

that each pilgrim shall relate two tales on the journey out, and two more on the way home; and that, on the return of the party to London, he who shall be adjudged to have related the best and most amusing story, shall sup at the common cost. Such is the general plan of the poem, and its development is natural. The tales admirably accord with the characters of the persons who relate them, and the remarks and criticisms to which they give rise are no less humorous and appropriate. Some of the stories suggest others, just as it would happen in real life, under the same circumstances. The pilgrims are persons of almost all ranks and classes of society. In the inimitable description of manners, persons, dress, and all the equipage, with which the poet has introduced them, we behold a vast and minute portrait gallery of the social state of England in the fourteenth century. They are—(1.) A Knight; (2.) A Squire; (3.) A Yeoman; (4.) A Prioress, a lady of rank, superior of a nunnery; (5, 6, 7, 8.) A Nun and three Priests, in attendance upon this lady; (9.) A Monk, represented as handsomely dressed and equipped, and passionately fond of hunting and good cheer; (10.) A Friar, or Mendicant Monk; (11.) A Merchant; (12.) A Clerk, or Student of the University of Oxford; (13.) A Serjeant of the Law; (14.) A Franklin, or rich country gentleman; (15, 16, 17, 18, 19.) Five wealthy burgesses, or tradesmen,—a Haberdasher, or dealer in silk and cloth, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Tapisser, or maker of carpets and hangings; (20.) A Cook, or rather the keeper of a cook's-shop; (21.) A Shipman, the master of a trading vessel; (22.) A Doctor of Physic; (23.) A Wife of Bath, a rich cloth-manufacturer; (24.) A Parson, or secular parish priest; (25.) A Ploughman, the brother of the preceding personage; (26.) A Miller; (27.) A Manciple, or steward of a college or religious house; (28.) A Reeve; (29.) A Sompnour, or Sumner, an officer whose duty was to summon delinquents to appear

in the ecclesiastical courts; (30.) A Pardoner, or vendor of Indulgences from Rome. To these thirty persons, must be added Chaucer himself, and the Host of the Tabard, making in all thirty-two.

If each of these pilgrims had related two tales on the journey to Canterbury, and two on the return, the work would have contained one hundred and twenty-eight stories, independently of the subordinate incidents and conversations; but the pilgrims do not arrive at their destination, and there are many evidences of confusion in the tales which Chaucer has given us, leading to the conclusion that the materials were not only incomplete, but also were left in an unarranged state by the poet. The stories that we possess are twenty-five in number,—three of which, the Cook's, the Squire's, and Chaucer's first, are "left half," or less than half, "told," and one, *Gamelyn*,\* is either entirely spurious or written by the poet for a different purpose. Eleven of the pilgrims are left silent. A Canon and his Yeoman unexpectedly join the cavalcade during the journey, but it is uncertain whether this episode, which was probably an after-thought of the poet, takes place on the journey to or from Canterbury. The Canon, who is represented as an Alchemist, half swindler and half dupe, is driven away from the company by shame at his attendant's indiscreet disclosures; and the Yeoman, remaining with the pilgrims, relates a most amusing story of the villanous artifices of the charlatans who pretended to possess the Great Arcanum. The stories narrated by the pilgrims are admirably introduced by what the author calls "prologues," consisting of remarks and criticisms on the preceding tale, and of incidents of the journey. The Tales are all in verse, with the exception of two, that of the Parson, and Chaucer's second narrative, the

\* The Cook's Tale of *Gamelyn*, if really written by Chaucer, was a close copy of one of the ballad stories common among the people, and was perhaps intended to be related on the journey home.

allegorical story of Melibeus and his wife Prudence. Those in verse exhibit an endless variety of metrical forms, used with consummate ease and dexterity; indeed, no English poet is more exquisitely melodious than Chaucer. The nature of the versification will often assist us in tracing the sources whence he derived or adapted his materials. He appears in no instance to have taken the trouble to invent the intrigues of his stories, but to have freely borrowed them, either from the multitudinous *fabliaux* of the Provençal poets, the legends of the mediæval chroniclers, or the immense storehouse of the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the rich treasury of the early Italian writers.

The Tales themselves may be roughly divided into the two great classes of serious, tragic or pathetic, and comic or humorous. We are filled with delight and admiration, whether we study his wonderful painting of character, the conciseness and vividness of his descriptions, the loftiness of his sentiment and the intensity of his pathos, or revel in the richness of his humor and the surpassingly droll, yet perfectly natural extravagance of his comic scenes. The finest of the pathetic stories are, the *Knight's Tale*—the longest of them all, in which is related the adventure of Palamon and Arcite; the *Squire's Tale*, a wild, half-Oriental story of love, chivalry, and enchantment; the *Man of Law's Tale*, the beautiful and pathetic story of Constance; the *Prioress's Tale*, the charming legend of "litel Hew of Lincoln," the child who was murdered for perseveringly singing his hymn to the Virgin; and above all the *Clerk of Oxford's Tale*, perhaps the most beautiful pathetic narration in the whole range of literature. This, the story of Griselda, the model and heroine of wifely patience and obedience, is the tenderest of all the serious narratives, as the *Knight's Tale* is the masterpiece among the descriptions of love and chivalric magnificence.

The *Knight's Tale* is freely borrowed from the *Theseida*

of Boccaccio. Though the action and personages of this noble story are assigned to classical antiquity, the sentiments, manners, and feelings of the persons introduced are those of chivalric Europe; the "Two Noble Kinsmen," Palamon and Arcite, being types of the knightly character. The *Squire's Tale* bears evident marks of Oriental origin; but whether it be a legend directly derived from Eastern literature, or received by Chaucer after having filtered through a Romance version, is now uncertain. It is equal to the preceding story in splendor and variety of incident and in word-painting, but far inferior in depth of pathos and ideal elevation of sentiment; yet it was by the *Squire's Tale* that Milton characterized Chaucer in that passage of the *Penseroso* where he evokes the recollections of the great poet:—

"And call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Cambal, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife  
That owned the virtuous ring and glass;  
And of the wondrous horse of brass  
On which the Tartar king did ride."

The *Man of Law's Tale* is taken with little variation from Gower's voluminous poem, "*Confessio Amantis*," the incidents of Gower's narrative being in their turn traceable to a multitude of romances.

The most pathetic of Chaucer's stories, that of Patient Griselda, narrated by the clerk of Oxford, is traceable to Petrarch's Latin translation of the last tale in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

The finest of Chaucer's comic and humorous stories are those of the Miller, the Reeve, and the Sompnour. Among these it is difficult to give the palm for drollery, acute painting of human nature, and exquisite ingenuity of incident. It is much to be regretted that the comic stories turn upon events of a kind which the refinement of modern manners

renders it impossible to analyze; but it should be remembered that society in Chaucer's day, though perhaps not less moral in reality, was far more outspoken and simple, and permitted and enjoyed allusions which are proscribed by the more precise delicacy of this age.

Two of these tales, as has been stated, are written in prose. These deviations from what seems to have been the original plan, are very naturally made. When Chaucer is applied to by the Host, he commences a rambling, puerile romance of chivalry, entitled the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, which promises to be an interminable story of knight-errant adventures, combats with giants, dragons, and enchanters, and is written in the exact style and metre of the Trouvère narrative poems—the only instance of this versification in the *Canterbury Tales*. He goes on gallantly “in the style his books of chivalry had taught him,” like Don Quixote, “imitating, as near as he could, their very phrase;” but he is suddenly interrupted, with many expressions of comic disgust, by the merry host:—

“‘No mor of this, for Goddes dignite!  
 Quod our Hoste, ‘for thou makest me  
 So wery of thy verray lewednesse,  
 That, al so wisly God my soule blesse,  
 Myn ceeres aken for thy draffy speche.  
 Now such a rym the devel I byteche!  
 This may wel be rym dogerel, quod he.”

Chaucer took this ingenious method of ridiculing and caricaturing the Romance poetry, which had reached the lowest point of the commonplace. Then, with great good-nature and a readiness which marks the man of the world, he offers to tell “a litel thing in prose;” and commences the long allegorical tale of *Melibeus and his wife Prudence*, in which, though the matter is often tiresome enough, he shows himself as great a master of prose as of poetry.

The other prose tale is narrated by the Parson. He is represented as a simple and narrow-minded though pious

and large-hearted pastor, who characteristically refuses to indulge the company with what can only minister to vain pleasure, and proposes something that may tend to edification, "moralite and vertuous matiere;" and so he commences a long and very curious sermon on the seven deadly sins, their causes and remedies. His discourse is a most interesting specimen of the theological literature of the day. It is divided and subdivided with all the painful minuteness of scholastic divinity; but it breathes throughout a noble spirit of piety, and in many passages attains great dignity of expression.

Besides these two *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer wrote in prose a translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione*, an imitation of that work, under the title of *The Testament of Love*, and an incomplete astrological work, *On the Astrolabe*, addressed to his son Lewis.

The general plan of the *Canterbury Tales* is believed to have been taken from the Decameron of Boccaccio, though the English poet's conception is infinitely superior to that of the Italian, whose ten accomplished young gentlemen and ladies assemble in their luxurious villa to escape from the terrible plague which is devastating Florence.

The difficulty of reading and understanding Chaucer has been much exaggerated. The principal facts that the student should keep in mind are, that the many French words in his writings had not been so modified, by changes in their orthography and pronunciation, as to become Anglicized, and are therefore to be read with their French accent; secondly, that the final *e* which terminates many English words is to be pronounced as a separate syllable, where the word following does not begin with a vowel or with the letter *h*; and, finally, that the past termination of the verb, *ed*, is almost invariably to be made a separate

syllable\* Some curious traces of the old Anglo-Saxon grammar, as the inflections of the personal and possessive pronouns, are still retained, together with a few details of the Teutonic formation of the verb.

Many attempts have been made to reduce Chaucer's writings to modern English, in order to introduce him to popular favor; but these friendly efforts have failed of gaining appreciation for him. To be thoroughly enjoyed, his writings must be read in their original diction. Distinguished poets have tried their skill in interpreting him, but with indifferent success. Wordsworth has adhered with tolerable fidelity to the language, and consequently to the spirit, of the original. His *Cuckoo and Nightingale*, *Prioress's Tale*, and *Troilus and Cresida*, retain much of Chaucer; but the less sympathetic minds of Dryden and Pope, in attempting to improve his expression, have impaired his sentiment.

\* The following metrical division of the first twelve verses of *The Prologue* gives illustration of these peculiarities of accent and pronunciation:

“ Whan that | April | le with | his schow | res swoote,  
 The drought | of Marche | hath per | ced to | the roote,  
 And ba | thnd eve | ry veyne | in suich | licour  
 Of which | vertue | engen | dred is | the flour;  
 Whan Ze | phyrus | eek with | his swe | te breeth  
 Enspi | rud hath | in eve | ry holte | and heeth  
 The ten | dre crop | pes and | the yon | ge sonne  
 Hath in | the Ram | his hal | fe cours | i-ronne.  
 And sma | le fow | les ma | ken me | lodie  
 That sle | pen al | the night | with o | pen yhe,  
 So prik | eth heen | nature | in here | corages :—  
 Thanne lon | gen folk | to gon | on pil | grimages,” &c.

In these verses the French accent must be given to the words *licour*, *vertue*, *nature*, *corages*, in order to meet the requirements of the rhythm. When Chaucer used them they had not become Anglicized in pronunciation. *Aprille*, *swele*, *yonge*, *halfe*, *smale*, have the final *e* pronounced as a separate syllable, for the words succeeding them do not begin with vowels nor with the letter *h*; but in *Marche*, *veyne*, *holte*, *nature*, the final *e* is silent.

NOTE.—The student will find special pleasure in studying the annotations to the *Prologue* and the *Knight's Tale* in Professor Carpenter's *Literature of the XIVth Century*, James Russell Lowell's essay on Chaucer, and an essay of the Westminster Review, published in July, 1866.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE CONTEMPORARIES OF CHAUCER.

RARE intellectual power is never monopolized by one man of a generation; it is held and displayed by a group of men. In literature a "bright particular star" does not shine forth unattended. Other stars accompany it, and shed a steady, though less brilliant, lustre over the literary firmament. Throughout the epochs of English as well as of classical literature, we find the great names grouped into distinct constellations around stars whose surpassing radiance, by attracting the gaze exclusively to themselves, often makes us insensible to the real splendor of their humble companions.

No writings—not even those of Chaucer himself—so faithfully reflect the popular feeling during the great social and religious movement of the fourteenth century, as that very remarkable series of poems which appeared under the name of **Piers Ploughman**.

(11.) The deep-seated discontent of the Commons with the 1362.] course of affairs in Church and State found a voice in these 1385.] works. They are three in number,—the *Vision*, the *Creed*, 1399.] and the *Complaint of Piers Ploughman*. They bear the closest resemblance to one another in form and spirit, as well as in style of execution, and were all written within the same half century. The *Vision*, the longest of the three, was the first in merit and in date, and was the model for the others. Allusions to the treaty of Bretigny, made in 1360, and to the great tempest of 1362, seem to fix the latter year, or thereabouts, as the time of its composition; and tradition assigns its authorship to WILLIAM\* LANGLANDE, who is otherwise unknown. Two facts are clear from

\* The author of this work is referred to as Robert, as William, and sometimes as John Langlande. He calls himself "William."

the work itself—that the writer was a Churchman, and that he sympathized heartily with the awakening spirit of the laboring classes. In this work Piers Ploughman (or Peter the Ploughman) is a purely allegorical personage. The Latin title more exactly conveys the nature of the *Vision*; it is *Visio Willelmi de Petro Ploughman*—a vision seen by the author, who is here called William, concerning Peter, a ploughman, who is the personification of the peasantry of England. The dreamer, exhausted by his long wanderings, goes to sleep on the Malvern Hills, and soon becomes aware of a goodly company gathered before him in a field:

“A fair feeld ful of folk  
Fond I there bitwene,  
Of alle manere of men,  
The meene and the riche,  
Werchyng and wandrynge.”

He is somewhat puzzled at first to understand what all this may mean, when a “lovely lady,” descending from a castle, announces herself as Holy Church, expounds to him the meaning of the scene that lies before him, and after leaving the key of the mystery with him, departs. The poet describes the various incidents that took place in this typical assembly, each of which shadows forth in simple allegory some move in the great game played by king, ecclesiastic, and noble. The work contains nearly fifteen thousand verses, arranged in twenty sections, so little connected with one another as to appear almost separate poems. Its prevalent tone is one of spirited satire, aimed against abuses and vices in general, but specially against the corruptions of the Church.

The *Creed of Piers Ploughman* is supposed to have been written twenty-three years later than the *Vision*. Though an imitation of the earlier work, it differs from it in many important respects. In it Piers Ploughman is no longer an allegorical character, but a real son of the soil. The author, an ardent disciple of Wycliffe, attacks the doctrines as well as the discipline of the Church, and refrains from political satire. The *Complaint of Piers Ploughman* is a mere fragment.

These three works are without regularity in the length of the lines, and without rhyme. They attempt to revive the use of alliteration, which was a distinctive feature of poetry in England previous to the introduction of rhymes by the Normans. This

alliteration consists in such an arrangement and selection of the words, that at least two of the most important words in the first line of a couplet, and at least one word in the second line, begin with the same letter. The opening verses of the *Vision* are given in illustration :

“In a somer seson  
Whan softe was the sonne,  
I shoop \* me into shroudes,†  
As I a sheep ‡ weere.

“In habite as an heremite,  
Unholy of workes,  
Wente wide in this world  
Wondres to here.”

The quaintness of this metrical device and the character of the allegory indicate that the author was attempting to gain whatever advantage there might be in a return to the ancient English style of poetry. These poems attained great popularity when they were first printed—in 1550—and they were effective in advancing the principles of the Reformation.

**B. 1325 ?]** But the name most closely linked with Chaucer's is  
**D. 1408 ?]** that of John Gower. During the greater part of their lives there was an intimate friendship between these two men. In their writings they gave each other fond praises. Chaucer dedicated *Troilus and Creseide* to “Moral Gower;” and the first edition of the *Confessio Amantis* (12) compliments Chaucer highly.

Gower's life was not so public, nor so full of vicissitudes, as his friend's. He was a man of wealth, and passed his years quietly in literary work. He seems to have enjoyed a dignified self-satisfaction in his compositions. His learning was extensive, and he was somewhat pedantic in its display. As the French was still the language of educated people in England, he used the alien tongue in the *Speculum Meditantis*, the first of his three principal poems. In the second of the three, when he undertook to describe the diseased condition of English society, he did not adopt his native speech, but, in the *Vox Clamantis*, gave utterance to his feelings in Latin verse. When Chaucer had shown the capabilities of English, Gower, in his blind old age, wrote the *Confessio Amantis*

\* Shaped.

† Clothes.

‡ Shepherd.

in that tongue. This work, though not his ablest, is by far the most interesting to us. It was undertaken at the request of Richard II., to whom, the poet says,

"Belongeth my legeaunce,  
With all mine heartes obeisaunce."

This first edition contains the celebrated passage in which Venus represents Chaucer as her disciple and poet, and expresses a wish that in his "later age" he shall "sette an end to all his werke by writing the Testament of Love." A second edition differs from the first merely in the omission of this compliment, and in the introduction of a new prologue, which ignores the memory of Richard, and dedicates the work with "entire affection" to Henry IV.

The *Confessio Amantis* is a poem consisting of eight books, in addition to the Prologue; one on each of the seven deadly sins, and another on the subject of philosophy generally. It is a collection of stories, strung together on a plan much inferior to Chaucer's. Instead of a number of characters, we have but two, Lover and Genius. The former, by direction of Venus, confesses his sins to the latter. Genius, the goddess's own clerk, listens to the penitent, and then, before shriving him, illustrates the enormity of his offences by an immense number of apposite stories. These are taken from the Bible, Ovid, the *Gesta Romanorum* (the oldest collection of tales extant), Godfrey of Viterbo, French *fabliaux*, and other sources, and illustrate the varied and extensive reading of the author. This poem has a certain charm for congenial minds; but its excellencies, such as they are, are balanced by many defects. It is tedious, overlaid with pedantry to a wearisome extent, and utterly without Chaucer's humor, passion, and love of nature. The author, while deploring the state of society in his time, and the offences of men in high place, is yet a stout supporter of the old order of things. His popularity with the cultivated classes continued for many generations. James of Scotland, in the fifteenth century, describes him and Chaucer as

"Superlative as poetis laureate,  
In moralitee and eloquence ornate;"

and Shakespeare, in the sixteenth century, not only borrows from him the materials of "Pericles," but also brings him upon the stage as chorus to that play.

# PROSE LITERATURE IN THE TIME OF CHAUCER.

The most meritorious writer of English prose in Chaucer's time was Chaucer himself; but his rare power in this department has been eclipsed by his transcendent genius as a poet. Of those writers whose fame depends on prose works alone, the chief are **Mandeville** and **Wycliffe**. Sir John Mandeville (1300-1372), who is sometimes erroneously called the father of English prose, published his well-known volume of travels in 1356. Mr. Hallam calls this our earliest English book. It professes to be an authentic account of what the author saw on his travels through the most distant countries of the East, but is, in reality, a collection of marvelous tales worthy only of being classed with the adventures of Baron Munchausen. Whatever truth it may contain is mingled with so much falsehood, that the whole narrative is worthless. The style, however, is straightforward and unadorned, and the composition may still be read with but little difficulty. The work was exceedingly popular in its time, for it gave accounts of strange peoples and countries about which Englishmen had never heard.

In his Prologue, Mandeville recognizes the confusion of the language of literature, and says that he has "put this boke out of Latyn into Frensche, and translated it again into Englyssche, that every man of my nation may understand it."

No name of the time will be longer remembered than that of **JOHN WYCLIFFE**, who first gave a complete copy of the Scriptures to the English people in the English tongue. This remarkable man, of almost as great importance in the literary as in **B. 1324.]** the political history of his nation, studied at Oxford, **D. 1384.]** and rose to considerable academical and ecclesiastical preferments. His life was marked by many vicissitudes. After having been alternately supported and abandoned by men of great influence, he closed his life peacefully at his Lutterworth parsonage. It was here, after his enemies had driven him from his Chair at Oxford, that he commenced his great translation, which is said to have been finished about the year 1380.\* The influence

\* A priest named Hereford assisted Wycliffe, and is believed to have been the translator of the work as far as Baruch, in the Apocrypha. The remainder of the work is attributed to Wycliffe.

exerted by this work upon our language cannot be overrated. Translated, as it was, from the Latin Vulgate, it makes the Latin the principal source of our theological vocabulary.

Wycliffe was the first eminent scholar who used the English tongue in attacking the ecclesiastical system. He was the forerunner of the Reformation. His sermons and polemical writings must be studied by those who would form a just notion of the highest intellectual power exerted at that time. He struck the first mighty blow against Roman Catholic supremacy in England.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM CHAUCER TO SPENSER.

**T**HE first great manifestation of English intellectual power terminated with the death of Chaucer. A period of decay followed, in which there was no display of literary genius. For more than a hundred and fifty years not a man of eminent intellect appeared. But the invention of printing and the revival of learning remind us that, though singularly deficient in great men, the time was by no means barren in results. The spiritual activities of the nation were gathering themselves for another marvelous outburst.

Three disciples of Chaucer, **Occleve**, **Lydgate**, and **James I. OF SCOTLAND**, have made their names worthy of mention as writers of verse in the first half of the fifteenth century.

In the finest passage of his best attempt at poetical composition, Occleve bewails the death of his master, Chaucer,\* and, but for the simple earnestness of that lament, there would be nothing in his literary work to command our esteem.

John Lydgate's writings were in high repute in his own century.

He furnished poetical compositions for entertainments  
**B. 1374.]** given by companies of merchants for May-day and  
**D. 1460?] Christmas festivals, for the pageants provided by the**  
corporation of the City of London, and for the masks

\* But wel away ! so is mine hertè wo  
That the honor of English tongue is dede,  
Of which I wont was have counsel and røde !

O mayster dere and fadir reverent,  
My mayster Chaucer, floure of eloquence,  
Mirrour of fructuous endement,  
O universal fadir in sciènce,  
Alas that thou thine excellent prudence  
In thy bed mortel mighteste not bequethe !  
What eyled Death ? Alas ! why would he sle the ?

before the king. Two hundred and fifty-one of these productions attributed to the prolific versifier, indicate in what esteem he was held by his own generation. For nearly fifty years this monk was the most popular English poet. His best known productions are the *Story of Thebes*, the *Destruction of Troy*, and the *Fall of Princes*. The first, a translation from Statius, a Latin poet of the first century, is given as an additional Canterbury Tale, told by Lydgate, who represents himself as having met Chaucer's pilgrims at an inn in Canterbury, and as having been allowed to return to London in their company. The *Fall of Princes* is a translation from Boccaccio, and contains the famous reference to his "maister Chaucer," "the lode-sterre of our language." The *Destruction of Troy*, a translation from a Latin prose romance, is a poem of interest, as it portrays many features of the social life of the fifteenth century.

But the most brilliant poet of the fifteenth century is James I. of Scotland. In 1405, when but eleven years old, he was captured on his way from Scotland to France, and was taken to the English court. Henry IV. and his successors detained him as a prisoner for nineteen years. Happy results for himself and for his nation followed from this captivity. The severe adversities developed those sterling qualities of character which made him the most eminent king of the Stuart line; and the loneliness of his earlier years prompted him to seek and gain that literary culture which has made his name famous in the world of letters. In the last year of his imprisonment he wrote his best work, the *King's Quair* (a quire, or book) (18), a poetical record of incidents in his life, and especially of his winning his queen, Jane Beaufort, granddaughter of John of Gaunt. From the window of his prison he caught a glimpse of

"The fairest or the freschest young floure,"

as she walked with her attendants "under the Toure." The poem contains nearly fourteen hundred lines, giving his sad reflections in the prison-house, and describing the sudden appearance of the beautiful vision of peerless loveliness, his hopes and despairs, and the happy ending of his courtship. No poem of equal merit was produced in the long interval between Chaucer and Spenser. It is distinguished by tenderness of expression, a manly delicacy of feeling, and a genuine poetic sensibility.



Besides these three, not a respectable versifier appeared in England during the fifteenth century; and these three are professed disciples of Chaucer. His influence over them is shown in the very stanza in which they wrote.

Few English names of this century will live as long **B. 1412.]** as that of **William Caxton.** To him England owes **D. 1491.]** her early participation in the benefits arising from the art of printing—the greatest invention of modern times. This invention, which was nothing more than the use of movable types in place of the old engraved wooden blocks, is now generally believed to have been made by John Gutenberg, of Mentz. He had conceived the plan about 1438, but on account of poverty was unable to put it into execution until twelve years afterwards, when he met with John Fust, a wealthy merchant, by whose assistance he brought out in 1455 the first printed book, the Latin Bible now known as the Mazarin. The art was introduced into England by Caxton. His printing-press was set up at Westminster, and its first work, the *Game of the Chesse*, appeared in 1474. From that time until his death in 1491, Caxton labored assiduously at his vocation, giving to the world sixty-four books. The majority of his publications were in English, consisting partly of translations and partly of original works. Many of these translations are from the printer's own pen. To other books he added prefaces of his own composition, so that he is fairly entitled to a place, though not a very high one, among English authors (26).

THE PASTON LETTERS, the earliest collection of the kind in the language, form a regular series, extending from before 1440 until 1505, and are so numerous that they filled five volumes on their first publication. By far the greatest number are written either by or to members of the Paston family. The collection is of the greatest historical importance, not only from the light it throws upon some of the dark passages of English history, but also from the valuable illustrations it supplies of the domestic manners and modes of thought and action that prevailed in the fifteenth century. The inner life of the period is laid open before us; its character and spirit are revealed to us through the very thoughts and words of men then living.

The early part of the sixteenth century was marked by some

improvements in our literature, although it produced no poet of special merit. The *Pastime of Pleasure*, by STEPHEN HAWES, a favorite of Henry VII., is a dull allegorical poem; and ALEXANDER BARCLAY'S *Ship of Fools* is merely a translation of the once celebrated satire of Sebastian Brandt. These works, though of little value in themselves, attest the marked progress that versification was making towards grace and harmony; and in this respect they indicate an approach to the manner of Spenser and Shakespeare.

The most prolific versifier of this period was John Skelton, (1460-1529), who is generally taken to typify the spirit of revolt then prevalent against ecclesiastical arrogance and authority, especially as represented by the great churchman, Cardinal Wolsey (21). Skelton was himself a member of the clerical profession. We have the testimony of Erasmus, then a resident in England, to his eminence as a scholar and man of letters. His bitter tongue, however, is said to have drawn down upon him the Cardinal's wrath, from which he was obliged to take refuge in the Sanctuary at Westminster, where he died in 1529. His Latin poems evince much classical elegance. His serious efforts in English are exceedingly heavy and tedious; but his satiric writings, coarse and vulgar as they are, show so much force and spirit that they still retain some degree of popularity. The peculiar doggerel measure in which his satiric works are composed, and his use of the familiar speech of the people, have attracted to him a degree of attention to which his intrinsic merits by no means entitle him. He has perfectly described and exemplified the character of his "breathless rhymes" in the following passage:

"For though my rime be ragged,  
Tattered and jagged,  
Rudely raine-beaten,  
Rusty and mooth-eaten,  
If ye take wel therewith,  
It hath in it some pith."

His principal attacks upon Wolsey are found in the *Booke of Colin Clout*, *Why come ye nat to Court?* and the *Bouge of Court* (i. e., *Bouche à Court*, diet allowed at court). Notwithstanding the admiration that is often expressed for this writer, his satirical compositions hardly rise above the dignity of lampoons. "His learning," in the opinion of Mr. Marsh, "certainly did little for the

improvement of his English style; and we may say of his diction in general, that all that is not vulgar is pedantic." Throughout his writings he seems to delight in alluding to the laurel, or degree in verse, conferred upon him at Oxford.

During the latter part of the fifteenth and the first years of the sixteenth century, **Blind Harry**, **Robert Henryson**, **Gawin Douglas**, and **William Dunbar**,\* the "early Scotch poets," flourished. It is to Scotland and to these men that we look for the best English poetry during the time when the poets of England were in a state of torpor. They were the successors of James I. of Scotland, and the only men in the two generations before Surrey, whose song is worthy of mention.

The poems of Wyatt and Surrey, though inferior to Skelton's works in force and vivacity, are superior in grace and elegance. They give the earliest indications of the dawn of the brightest day that English literature had seen. Although unequal in merit, they possess so much in common, there is such marked similarity in their manner, that their names are closely associated.† The higher place is invariably assigned to the younger, **Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey** (1517–1547), whose early, unmerited death on the scaffold in 1547, has deepened the romantic interest that surrounds his name (23, 24). His contributions to poetry are not very extensive, but are of considerable importance, as well from their excellence as from the new metrical form and style in which many of them are written. It is to Surrey that we owe two of the greatest literary innovations—the introduction of the sonnet, and the use of blank verse—and he was the first to write in that involved style, which so strikingly distinguishes the language of Shakespeare from that

\* Mr. Craik says that "this admirable master, alike of serious and of comic song, may justly be styled the Chaucer of Scotland, whether we look to the wide range of his genius, or to his eminence in every style over all the poets of his country who preceded and all who for ages came after him. Burns is certainly the only name among the Scottish poets that can yet be placed on the same line with that of Dunbar; and even the inspired ploughman, though the equal of Dunbar in comic power and his superior in depth of passion, is not to be compared with the older poet either in strength or in general fertility of imagination."

† "Henry, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyat, between whom I finde very little difference, I repute them for the two chief lanternes of light to all others that have since employed their pennes upon English Poesie; their conceits were loftie, their stiles stately, their conveyance cleanly, their termes proper, their metres sweete and well proportioned."—*Puttenham*, 1589.

of Chaucer. A version of the second and fourth books of the *Æneid*, in what Milton called "English heroic verse without rhyme;" numerous sonnets on many subjects, chiefly amatory; a satire on the citizens of London, together with paraphrases of Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalms, constitute the main portion of his writings. The fanciful theories of some later editors have attached an undue significance to his connection with the fair Geraldine, in whose honor many of his best sonnets were written.

*Chaucer* Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), though fourteen years older than his friend, is generally regarded as his poetical disciple; but he is undoubtedly a poet of a much lower type (22). He, too, composed many songs and sonnets on the one inexhaustible topic—love. His satires and his metrical versions of the Penitential Psalms supply an additional point of resemblance between himself and Surrey. In both, the highly beneficent influences of an acquaintance with Italian literature are manifest; influences which affected the entire structure and spirit of English poetry for more than a century, imparting to it a smoothness and melody unknown before, without impairing in the slightest degree its native strength and manliness of tone. Their collected works were first published ten years after Surrey's death.

The stirring old **English Ballads**, though composed by unknown minstrels, must not be overlooked. Their language is simple, their verse rude, their thoughts rugged—they are full of sympathy for the outlaw, yet they have a charm for those who delight in the expressions of simple-hearted human nature. They were composed, nearly all of them, in this comparatively barren period of English literature, between the time of Chaucer and the time of Spenser. Anarchy in the state, tyranny, and the constant warfare waged along the Scottish border, were among the causes which stirred the rude poets to recital of their loves and hatreds. Tradition saved these compositions for us. They were not gathered into a volume until the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Bishop Percy brought them together, thinking that they might furnish material for missing chapters in the history of our language. As we read his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, the incantation of the old minstrels places us under a spell, and, for the time, makes us forgetful of the fascination of the modern poets.

We are transported back to the days of rude life in England. We sup, and watch, and fight, and love with the brave, lawless yeomen. Strive as they may, our poets of a nobler civilization cannot produce companion-pieces to the *Ancient Ballad of Chery Chase*, or to *Adam Bell*, *Clym of the Clough*, and *William of Cloudesley*. "Young Lochinvar" and "Sheridan's Ride" are spirited, but they do not approach the old ballads in graphic terseness, in poetic simplicity, in fiery fervor, in tenderness of pathos. The reproduction of such poetry is prevented by the civilization of this age. Law, not lawlessness, is honored now. Personal prowess, reckless daring, are dangerous to society in this day; they gave protection to the little bands of the English wood; they received the grateful applause of men who lived amid the perils of the Scottish Border. It was the hardihood of the age that produced the old ballads. Many of them appear in two forms: the early genuine verses in their original rudeness, and a later edition, in which some versifier has endeavored to smooth and polish their crudities. These attempts at improvement invariably dissipate the energy of the original. To appreciate the spirit of these poems, they should be read in the earlier forms. For example, the familiar *Ballad of Chery Chase* is an attempt at improving an old ballad; yet the old song (23) is superior in vigor, in vivacity, and is far more inspiring to the fancy. A few stanzas may illustrate its energy:

"The Persè owt\* of Northombarlande,†  
And a vowe to God mayd he,  
That he wolde hunte in the mountayns  
Off chyviat within ‡ dayes thre,  
In the mauer § of doughti Doglas,  
And all that ever with him be.

"The fattiste hartes in all cheviat  
He sayd he wold kill and cary them away;  
'Be my feth,' sayd the doughti Doglas agayn,  
'I wyll let † that hontyng yf that I may.'

"Then the Persè owt of Barborowe cam,  
With him a myghtye meany, ¶  
With fifteen hundrith archares bold;  
The wear chosen out of shyars\*\* thre."

\* Came out. † The land north of the Humber. ‡ During. § In spite of.  
‡ Hinder. ¶ A strong company. \*\* Shires.

There follows a description of the foray, beginning on a Monday morning, of the scattering of the huntsmen, of the gathering and dressing of the deer, of the alert watchers, of the oncoming of Douglas and his men, of the brave parley before the fight, of the onset, of the bloody death of the two leaders, and of the unyielding struggle until the sun went down, and the battle not yet over. The woe of bereaved women is touchingly depicted; and then the poem closes as boldly and as bluntly as it began. It was of this ballad that Sir Philip Sidney said, "I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet."

Interesting as these old English ballads are, the Scottish are pronounced superior by Hallam, the most judicious of critics; and it is generally admitted that the minstrelsy of the border counties of the two kingdoms has greater energy than that of the southern provinces of England.

Although the prose writers in the first half of the sixteenth century are few in number, their works were generally excellent of their kind. Sir Thomas More stands pre-eminent **B. 1480.]** among them. He was a man of profound scholarship, **D. 1535.]** of earnest piety, and of irrepressible good-humor.

When he was yet in his youth it was said of him, "There is but one wit in England, and that is young Thomas More." Entering the profession of the law, he quickly gained distinction. The progressive scholars of the day applauded him when he appeared, against desperate opposition, as a champion for the introduction of the study of Greek into the universities of England. The eminent Erasmus was his devoted and admiring friend. He gained one position after another as a servant of the state, until he reached the bench of the chancellor. But when he ventured to thwart the purposes of Henry VIII. by refusing to acknowledge the validity of that monarch's marriage to Anne Boleyn, neither the eminence of his position nor his former intimacy with the king could save him from a cruel death. Disaster did not disturb his serene good-humor. Disgrace, imprisonment, and threatening danger were brightened by his genial wit; and even as he climbed the scaffold to bow beneath the headsman's axe, he gayly said, "I pray you see me safe up; and for my coming down let me shift for myself."

Sir Thomas More's fame as a writer rests upon two works. The one most remarkable, on account of its literary style, is his *Life of Edward V.*, a work pronounced by Mr. Hallam "the first example of good English language—pure and perspicuous, well chosen, without vulgarisms or pedantry." But his best known work, the *Utopia*, is written in Latin, and is known to most modern readers through Burnet's translation. It is a romantic description of the happy state of a republic on an island, where the laws and social and political usages are in strict accordance with philosophical perfection. Many of its suggestions are of a most enlightened character, and far in advance of the author's time. The work is full of fancy and invention. Every house has its spacious garden; every citizen understands agriculture, and is expert at some trade; six hours of work, no more and no less, is allowed. There are no taverns in that happy land; and change of fashions, frivolity, cruelty, and wars are unknown. Utopia, the name of the republic, signifies "No land" (*ov' τοπος*). More's other works are not numerous. They are controversial; and are expressions of his ardent attachment to the Roman Catholic religion. Tradition assigns him a place among the most eminent of English orators.

*Lord Berners's Chronicle of Froissart* should be mentioned among the English prose writings of this century, for it is one of the best translations ever made.

The development of historical literature is by successive stages. Its earliest expression, in the ancient as well as in the modern world, is legendary, and its form is poetical. The legends are succeeded by chronicles, and after ages of civilization the chronicles furnish the historian with the rude materials for his work. Thus, in the development of our historical literature, we have fabulous British legends, the chronicles of the monastic and the *trouvère*, the systematically compiled narrative, and the philosophical treatise of the modern historian. In the pages of **Robert Fabyan** and of **Edward Hall** we find the first attempts made by English writers for a systematic compilation of past events. Fabyan, an alderman and sheriff of London, gathers the mythical, semi-mythical, and authentic events of English history, and reduces them to a regular narrative, called the *Concordance of Historyes*. Hall, a judge in the same city, under the title of the *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of York and Lancastre*, gives a

history of England under these two royal families, and down to the year 1532. These writings, though totally devoid of any pretensions to history in the genuine sense of the word, are valuable, not only as storehouses of facts for modern narrators, but also as monuments of the language, and as examples of the popular feeling of the time.

The *Toxophilus* of Roger Ascham (1515–1568), published in 1545, was written to revive the then decaying interest in the use of the bow, and is distinguished by quiet dignity of style and manliness of spirit. It is composed in the form of a dialogue between Philologus and Toxophilus. Eighteen years afterwards, when tutor to Queen Elizabeth, this same author brought out his more important work, *The Schoolmaster*, which is still valuable for the principles and rules of teaching expounded therein. For a learned man to write a scholarly book in the English language, at the middle of the sixteenth century, was a startling innovation, and therefore Ascham presents the following apology in the preface of his work :

“As for the Latin or Greek tongue, everything is so excellently done in them that none can do better; in the English tongue, contrary, everything in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse. \* \* \* \* He that will write well in any tongue must follow the counsel of Aristotle, to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do, as so should every man understand him, and the judgment of wise men allow him.”

More than a century had passed since Wycliffe made his translation of the Bible. Meanwhile the language had so changed that Wycliffe's version was intelligible to but few English readers. There was great demand for a printed Bible. Englishmen wished to read the book for themselves. The nation was agitated on religious subjects, and was on the verge of the Reformation. **B. 1480.] William Tyndale**, burning with the desire **D. 1536.]** to put the Word of God within the reach of the humblest of his countrymen, set himself to the work of translating the New Testament from the Greek. After many discouragements his work was accomplished, and the first edition was printed—probably at Cologne—in 1525. Its publication was hailed with delight. Threats and severe penalties could not



prevent men from selling and buying it. The King of England frowned, the Church pronounced its curses; but all in vain, for the people were determined to possess the book. Knowing that persecution and death would stop his working should he return to his own country, Tyndale remained on the Continent. He was diligently translating the Old Testament. *The Five Books of Moses* and *An English Version of the Book of Job* were completed by him. At last he was treacherously delivered to officers who were searching for him, and, after eighteen months of imprisonment, he was tried at the Castle of Vilvoord, near Brussels, was convicted of heresy, was strangled and burned at the stake. In the agony of dying he gave expression to the faith which had prompted his earnest efforts, as he prayed, "O Lord, open the King of England's eyes!" All critics accord praise to the literary excellence of Tyndale's work. His language is pure and simple. His style is energetic. He has done more than any other to establish our idioms and our diction. All English translators of the Bible since his day have imitated him closely.\*

1535.] **Miles Coverdale**, Bishop of Exeter, has the glory of publishing the first *printed copy* of the whole Bible. It lacks the simplicity and energy of Tyndale's version.

\* "Tyndale's translation of the New Testament is the most important philological monument of the first half of the sixteenth century, perhaps I should say of the whole period between Chaucer and Shakespeare, both as an historical relic, and as having more than anything else contributed to shape and fix the sacred dialect, and establish the form which the Bible must permanently assume in an English dress.—*Marsh's Lectures on the English Language*, p. 113.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NON-DRAMATIC ELIZABETHAN POETS.

"THE ELIZABETHAN AGE" is marked by features which give it peculiar distinction in the history of the literary world. The language had just reached its thorough development. Thought was rejoicing in a recent and sudden emancipation. The writers were men of originality and of high intellectual culture, who found the ancient and foreign literatures filled with materials and imagery which had not yet had time to become commonplace for English readers. They united freshness and dignity in their poetry and in their prose. The literary activity begun in the reign of Elizabeth was carried on through the reign of James I.

But the progress of this age was not in literature alone. There was an awakening of the people to general social improvement. Life was recognized as worth enjoying, and its enjoyment was found in a new way of living. Comforts were invented and used.\*

\* Holinshed, writing at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, says: "There are old men yet dwelling in the village where I remain which have noted three things to be marvellously altered in England within their sound remembrance: One is the multitudes of chimneys lately erected; whereas, in their young days, there were not above two or three, if so many, in the most nplandish towns of the realm (the religious houses and manor places of their lords always excepted, and peradventure some great personage); but each made his fire against a reredosse in the hall, where he dined and dressed his meat. The second is the great amendment of lodging; for said they, 'our fathers and we ourselves have lain full oft upon straw pallets, covered only with a sheet, under coverlets made of dogswaine, and a good round log under their heads instead of a bolster.' \* \* \* \* As for servants, if they had any sheet *above* them it was well, for seldom had they any under their bodies to keep them from the pricking straws that ran oft through the canvass and rased their hardened hides. The third thing they tell us of is the exchange of treene platters (so called, I suppose, from tree or wood) into pewter, and wooden spoons into silver or tin. For so common were all sorts of treene vessels in old time, that a man should hardly find four pieces of pewter (of which one was peradventure a salt) in a good farmer's house."

Houses were built upon improved plans. The architect and the artist were recognized as contributing to the pleasure of life. There was wonderful improvement in the use of materials. In this startling age the whole national mind was interested in questions of state. Sympathies and prejudices were intense. For the first time the average Englishman was using his brain. Society was active, thoughtful, aspiring, and its influence upon those who had genius for letters was powerfully stimulating. The great writers who shine in the literary splendor of the Elizabethan age were the natural product of the newly-awakened, thoughtful English nation of that day.

The first name that gains a lasting distinction is that of **Thomas Sackville**, Lord Buckhurst, (1536-1608). After winning much applause for his share in the composition of a tragedy, he planned a work entitled *A Mirror for Magistrates*. It was to narrate in verse a series of tragic stories drawn from the history of England; and these stories were to serve as lessons of virtue, and as warnings to future kings and statesmen. Other, and dreary poets carried out the details of Sackville's ingenious plan. In 1559 the first edition of the work appeared. Other editions followed, each succeeding one containing new contributions of verse, until the sixth edition, published in 1571, was of enormous bulk. Although the work was admired in its own day, it has not sufficient poetical merit to attract the attention of the modern reader. Sackville himself wrote the *Induction* (the introduction) and the *Complaint of Henry, Duke of Buckingham*; and by these parts he saved the work from utter stupidity. He had power of expression and skill in the conduct of allegorical thought; but his meditations are very serious, and gloom shadows the playing of his imagination. These poetic passages were written in his early life, and they are all that he has contributed to literature. They fill but a small place on the printed page, yet they are so far superior to what was written by the contemporaneous poets of his early life, that we may appropriately call him the herald of the splendors of the Elizabethan Literature. After his early manhood all his years were crowded with the cares of state.

**Sir Philip Sidney**, (1554-1586) exerted a potent influence over the spirit of his age. The qualities of his character commanded the loving respect of all men. His tastes were scholarly, his love for virtue was intense, he was magnanimous, he had heroic traits, and

after living nobly he died a hero. His definition of gentlemanliness—"high erected thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy"—might be pronounced as the fitting description of his manliness. In his own time and until the present day he has been regarded as the model English gentleman. The charm of his life has led to over-estimates of the worth of his writings. His contributions to our literature consist of a small collection of sonnets called *Astrophel and Stella* (44); a prose romance entitled *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*; and *A Defence of Poesy* (55.) The sonnets have a languid elegance. The *Arcadia*, full of the spirit of chivalry, illustrates in its style the defects of that euphuism to which we shall refer hereafter. The story, though it would be tedious to the devoted reader of Scott or Dickens, was popular in the days of Shakespeare, and was the most charming of books to the people of leisure and fashion in the first half of the seventeenth century. Sidney's *Defence of Poets* is the work on which his fame in literature now rests. It is a manly attempt to set forth the worth of the poet, and was written in opposition to the doctrine of the radical Puritans of that day, who, in their fanatical zeal, denounced whatever contributed to a taste for the beautiful.

EDMUND SPENSER.

"Our sage and serious Spenser."—*Milton*.

"Milton has acknowledged to me that Spenser was his original."—*Dryden*.

"Master Edmund Spenser had done enough for the immortality of his name, had he only given us his *Shepherd's Kalendar*."—*Drayton*.

"There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth."—*Pope*.

"Do you love Spenser? I love him in my heart of hearts."—*Southey*.

"The poetry of Spenser is remarkable for brilliant imagination, fertile invention, and flowing rhythm; yet, with all these recommendations, it is cold and tedious."—*Chateaubriand*.

"Spenser seems to me a most genuine poet, and to be justly placed after Shakespeare and Milton, and above all other English poets."—*Mackintosh*.

"We must not fear to assert, with the best judges of this and former ages, that Spenser is still the third name in the poetical literature of our country, and that he has not been surpassed, except by Dante, in any other."—*Hallam*.

"Among the numerous poets belonging exclusively to Elizabeth's reign, Spenser stands without a class and without a rival. \* \* \* There are few eminent poets in the language who have not been essentially indebted to him."—*Campbell*.

"One unpardonable fault, the fault of tediousness, pervades the whole of the *Faerie Queene*. We become sick of cardinal virtues and deadly sins, and long for the society of plain men and women. Of the persons who read the first canto, not one in ten reaches the end of the first book, and not one in a hundred perseveres to the end of the poem."—*Macaulay*.

"But some people will say that all this (the *Faerie Queene*) may be very fine, but they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them; they look at it as a child looks at a dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with them. Without minding it at all, the whole is as plain as a pike-staff."—*Hazlitt*.

THE only non-dramatic poet of the Elizabethan age who could rank by the side of the best poets of this century was the illustrious **Edmund Spenser**.

**B. 1552 ?]** After the long and dreary interval of nearly  
**D. 1599.]** two centuries, he appeared as the worthy suc-

cessor to Chaucer. He was born in London, about 1552. During his youth he lived in humble circumstances. He was educated at the University of Cambridge. After acquiring much genuine culture at the university, he began his brilliant and unhappy career as a man of letters. Two years were spent in the north of England, where he wrote the *Shepherd's Calendar*, finding in its composition some solace for his grief and disappointment as a lover.\* At Cambridge he had formed an intimate friendship with Gabriel Harvey, a man of learning and of considerable literary reputation. This friend summoned Spenser from the north of England to London, and introduced him to Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney welcomed the poet to his house, treated him with the utmost kindness, and cheered him on in his literary ambition. At Sidney's mansion Spenser revised his *Shepherd's Calendar*, and, under the title of the *Poet's Year*, dedicated it to "Maister Philip Sidney, worthy of all titles, both of chivalry and poesy." He was anxious to win the patronage of some great person who would treat him so generously as to enable him to devote his life to literary pursuits. In our day, such an ambition would be considered unmanly and servile; but it must be remembered that before Shakespeare no man had been able to earn his bread by literary work. Whoever had love for letters, if he were a poor man, had either to quench that love or to secure the patronage of wealth. Spenser's object was well-nigh accomplished when

\* "Early in Spenser's life he had worshipped a fair Rosalind, whose faithless trifling with him and eventual preference of a rival are recorded in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. E. K. (an unknown commentator on Spenser) tells us that 'the name being well ordered will betray the *very name* of Spenser's love,' whence it has been conjectured that she was a lass of the name of *Rosa Lynde*. \* \* \* He remained some twelve or fourteen years without thoughts of marriage. But in the years 1592-3 he fell in with an Elizabeth (her surname is lost), towards whom his heart turned; and after a courtship set forth in his *Amoretti* or sonnets, he married her in 1594. He was then forty-one or forty-two years of age. His wife was of lowly origin. 'She was certes but a country lasse,' but beautiful—'so sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she.' Her eyes were 'sapphires blue,' her hair of 'rippling gold.'"—*Clarendon Press Series—The Faery Queene*, p. 8.

Sidney became his friend. Sidney presented him to Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the favorite of Elizabeth, and Dudley brought him under the notice of the Queen. To her Spenser paid his literary homage, gaining her applause, and receiving an appointment in Ireland in 1580. Six years afterwards, a grant of about three thousand acres of confiscated lands, not far from Cork, was given to him. Kilcolman Castle was his residence; and there, surrounded by the charms of wonderfully beautiful scenery, but far removed from the society of men of letters, and bitterly hated by the Irish peasantry, he composed the most important of his poetical works. In 1591 a pension of fifty pounds a year was decreed to him by the Queen. Occasional visits from English gentlemen and infrequent journeys to England relieved the monotony of his secluded life. In 1598 a great rebellion broke out in the southern part of Ireland. English residents could look for no mercy from the insurgents. Spenser was specially disliked by them. His castle was attacked and burned, and his infant child perished in the flames. Overwhelmed by his misfortune and his grief, the poet hastened to London, where he died in January, 1599. There was great pomp at his funeral. "Poets attended upon his hearse, and mournful elegies, with the pens that wrote them, were thrown into his tomb." He was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the tomb of Chaucer. The years of his life were almost coincident with the years of the reign of the great Queen.\*

Spenser's avowed aim was to write in the spirit of

\* "Short curling hair, a full moustache, close-clipped beard, heavy eyebrows, and under them thoughtful brown eyes, whose upper eyelids weigh them dreamily down; a long and straight nose, strongly developed, answering to a long and somewhat spare face, with a well-formed, sensible-looking forehead; a mouth almost obscured by the moustache, but still showing rather full lips, denoting feeling, well set together, so that the warmth of feeling shall not run riot, with a touch of sadness in them. Such is the look of Spenser, as his portrait hands it down to us. A refined, thoughtful, warm-hearted, pure-souled Englishman." — *Clarendon Press Series—The Faery Queene*, p. 10.

Chaucer and Piers Ploughman, rather than after the spiritless versifiers of the fifteenth century. His first fame was gained by the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar*. This work is a series of pastorals, divided into twelve parts, a part for each month, in which, as in Virgil's *Bucolics*, the imaginary interlocutors discuss questions of morality and of state. By depicting English scenery, and by selecting English names for his rustics, he endeavored to give a national air to these eclogues. They abound in fine descriptions of nature. Towards their close he anticipates the greater glory that will be found in his later writing. The work was thought by his contemporaries to mark an epoch in the literature. In language and in sentiment it was more rustic than pastoral poetry had been.

Spenser's greatest work, **The Faery Queene (38-42)**, is the latest and most brilliant poetical expression of the sentiments of chivalry. Whatever charms may be in allegory, in graphic narration, in splendid description, are found in this extended, though incomplete, poem. The original plan proposed twelve books of moral adventures, each book recounting the exploit of a knight and the triumph of a virtue. The hero of the entire poem was Prince Arthur. In the twelve books he was to be perfected in the twelve *moral* virtues; and the poet purposed, if this work should be successful, to write a second poem, in which the *political* virtues of the same hero should be sung. But six of the first twelve books were published. Tradition asserts that the latter portion was completed and lost at sea; but it is probable that the design was never executed. That the work is incomplete need not be regretted; for the vigor, invention, and splendor found in the first three books decline in the fourth, fifth, and sixth. The carefulness of the poet does not abate. The reader has keen sympathy for the toiling patience which polished and decorated even the most obscure parts of the poem. That fidelity to details probably prevented the completion



of the work. The plans of the structure were all drawn; the elevations gave promise of grandeur; each part was finished as the builder proceeded; but the time and labor he gave in arranging and beautifying materials had consumed his life when his work was not half done.

The hero, Prince Arthur, arriving at the court of the Faery Queene in Fairy-Land, finds her holding a solemn festival during twelve days. At the court there is a beautiful lady for whose hand the twelve most distinguished knights are rivals; and in order to settle their pretensions these twelve heroes undertake twelve separate adventures, which furnish the materials for the action. The First Book relates the expedition of the Red-Cross Knight, who is the allegorical representative of *Holiness*, while his mistress Una represents true *Religion*; and the action of the knight's exploit shadows forth the triumph of Holiness over the enchantments and deceptions of Heresy. The Second Book recounts the adventures of Sir Guyon, or *Temperance*; the Third, those of Britomartis—a female champion—or *Chastity*. Each of these books is subdivided into twelve cantos; consequently the poem, even in the imperfect form under which we possess it, is extremely voluminous. The publication of these three books was long delayed on account of the unfavorable criticism of Harvey; but in 1589, Sir Walter Raleigh visited Spenser, heard the fragment of the poem, gave it enthusiastic applause, and persuaded the author to accompany him to England in order that what was written might be given to the public without delay.\*

\* "When we conceive Spenser reciting his compositions to Raleigh in a scene so beautifully appropriate, the mind casts pleasing retrospect over that influence which the enterprise of the discoverer of Virginia and the genius of the author of the *Faery Queene* have respectively produced in the fortune and language of England. The fancy might easily be pardoned for a momentary superstition that the genius of their country hovered, unseen, over their meeting, casting her first look of regard on the poet that was destined to inspire her future Milton, and the other on her maritime hero, who paved the way for colonizing distant regions of the earth, where the language of England was to be spoken, and the poetry of Spenser to be admired."—*Thomas Campbell*.

The three books appeared in 1590, and were dedicated to Elizabeth. She reciprocated the poet's compliment by granting him a pension of fifty pounds a year. But his best praise was given by the multitude of readers who recognized him as the noblest poet their country had produced. He returned to Ireland to prosecute his work, and in 1596 published the fourth, fifth, and sixth books, allegories of *Friendship*, *Justice*, and *Courtesy*.

In this poem, three different qualities are harmonized which would appear irreconcilable: for the plan of the story is derived from chivalric legends; the moral sentiment from the lofty philosophy of Plato, combined with the noblest Christian purity; while the versification is filled with the flowing grace and sensuous elegance of the great Italian poets. No man ever had a fonder love of the good and the beautiful; no poem has a steadier radiance of goodness and beauty. There are no blazing passages of passion in Spenser's writing. "He has auroral lights in profusion, but no lightning."\* We may smile or we may be saddened in reading him, but we neither laugh nor weep. The power of Spenser's genius is displayed in an unequalled richness of description. He describes *to the eye*. To the airy conceptions of allegory he gives the distinctness of real objects.

Those who would read him with the intensest delight † must not try to interpret the allegory. They must yield themselves to the mighty magic of his imagination. Though tiresome to many a reader, he is the most enchanting of

\* Whipple.

† " 'Much depends,' says Charles Lamb, 'upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Faery Queene* for a stop-gap?' Select rather a June morning, when the brilliant white clouds are sailing slowly through a blue sky, a grassy bank under a tree, looking down a long valley with broken hills in the distance; let mind and body both be at ease, and both be disposed to dream, but not to sleep, and when the influences of nature have had their due effect, open, if you please, at the middle of the *Legend of Sir Gnyon*."—*Professor F. J. Child*.

poets to one who is endowed with a lively fancy. He is justly called "the poet's poet."

No poetry can be more uniformly and exquisitely musical than Spenser's. The richness of the sound, the sweetness of the rhythm, would surfeit the ear and make the verse enervate, were he not a master who modulates the sound, and paints the pictures for the fancy. The stanza he used, named after him the *Spenserian*, consists of nine lines, and is formed by adding an Alexandrine to Chaucer's stanza of eight lines. It demands a frequent recurrence of the same rhymes—four of one ending, three of another, and two of a third—and in supplying this demand throughout the poem, Spenser was obliged to do violence to the orthography and accentuation of the language, to use many archaic and provincial words, and even, in some cases, to invent the word that should furnish his verse with the needed rhyme. His vocabulary was considered antique and peculiar by his contemporaries. His peculiarities have affected the language less than those of any other great writer.

Whenever Spenser was not playing the part of a courtier he manifested a retiring spirit. He was imaginative rather than observant, and did not seek society where he could observe real men; therefore his descriptions of men are the products of his fancy. Still he has intense sympathy with the aroused spirit of his nation. Throughout his works there are allusions to her greatness and warm applause for her championship of justice and progress, and there is a breathing of the purest loyalty for the nation's queen.

Among the more important of his minor poetical works are *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, a satire, written in his youth, upon the hypocrisy of certain classes of the clergy, and upon the heartlessness of the life at court, *Daphnida* and *Astrophel*, elegies on the deaths of Lady Howard and Sir Philip Sidney; and above all his *Epithalamium* (43), written in celebration of his own marriage to the "fair Elizabeth," the

chastest and most beautiful marriage-hymn to be found in the whole range of literature. The ardor of his love transfused it with a rapture not found elsewhere in his verse. Hallam says of it,—“It is a strain redolent of a bridegroom’s joy, and of a poet’s fancy. The English language seems to expand itself with a copiousness unknown before, while he pours forth the varied imagery of this splendid little poem.”

Spenser has left one work which displays his energy and skill as a writer of prose. It is *A View of the State of Ireland*, setting forth his estimate of the character and condition of the Irish people, and recommending a severe and cruel policy to the English government.\*

— 16.

**Samuel Daniel** (1562–1619), who is said to have succeeded Spenser as Poet Laureate, enjoyed among his contemporaries a respect merited by his talents and by his character. His life was quiet and studious. He wrote many lyrics, a few dramatic compositions, and *The History of the Civil Wars*, a poem on the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster (46). His language is pure, limpid, and free from the affectation of archaism, which is found in Spenser’s writing.

**Michael Drayton** (1563–1631) was an industrious poet; also much admired by his contemporaries. His longest and most celebrated work, entitled *Polyolbion* (48), is a poetical ramble over England and Wales, and is unique in literature. In thirty ponderous cantos, containing fifteen thousand monotonous Alexandrine couplets, he enthusiastically, but with painful accuracy, describes the rivers, mountains, and forests of his country, giving also detailed accounts of local legends and antiquities. Many truly poetic passages are found in the work; but it is chiefly

\* The following generally accessible works contain specially interesting discussions of the life and writings of Spenser :

Whipple’s *Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, The Introduction to the Clarendon Press edition of the *Faery Queene*, the Memoir in Professor Child’s Edition of Spenser’s works, Hallam’s *Literature of Europe*, Taine’s *English Literature*, Blackwood’s Magazine for November, 1833, Campbell’s *Specimens of English Poetry*, Hazlitt’s *Lectures on the English Poets*, Lectures II. and III.

interesting as a monument of untiring industry. Among his other writings are *The Barons' Wars*, a poem describing the principal events of the unhappy reign of Edward II., *England's Heroical Epistles*, letters supposed to have been written by illustrious Englishmen to the objects of their love, and the exquisite *Nymphidia* (47), in which everything that is delicate, quaint, and fantastic in fairy mythology is accumulated, and touched with consummate felicity.

The success of Spenser led many aspirants to seek poetical fame in allegorical composition. Two brothers, **Giles** (1588-1623) and **Phineas Fletcher** (1584-1650), cousins of Beaumont's colleague, were the only imitators who had enough of Spenser's spirit to copy him with any success. The first published a poem entitled *Christ's Victory and Triumph* (53); the second, under the title of *The Purple Island*, wrote an allegorical description of the human body and mind. But allegorical anatomy, however skilfully managed, is not attractive to the reader. When the veins and arteries of the body are described as brooks and rivers of blood, poetical fancy cannot redeem verse from the ludicrous misuse.

The origin of English poetical satire is generally assigned to this age. Many passages, indeed, of social and personal invective are found in earlier writers; Chaucer's pictures of the monastic orders abound in open and implied censure; both the spirit and matter of Langlande's work are satirical: but in neither of these authors is satire an essential characteristic; a certain infusion of it was inevitable to the task they undertook, but it was far from being a primary condition. Skelton was too ribaldrous, too full of mere venom and spite against individuals, to be ranked as anything more than a mere lampooner; and Surrey and Wyatt pointed out the way to this kind of composition without following it themselves. The first English writer who distinctly calls himself a satirist is **Joseph Hall** (1574-1656) (118); and the general opinion of later critics has acquiesced in his assertion. In 1597, then fresh from Cambridge, he published three books of *biting satires*, and two years afterwards, three more of *toothless satires*. To the collective work he gave the name of *Virgidemarium*, or a harvest of rods (51). These poems seem to fulfill all the conditions of satire; with great energy and some humor, they attack the prevailing follies and affectations both of literature and social life. Though the numbers are often harsh and the meaning obscure, they possess enough of the spirit

of Juvenal to make them still readable. In later life Hall won greater distinction by his sermons; and as a champion of episcopacy he ventured to grapple with Milton himself.

The number of minor poets produced indicates the unparalleled literary activity of the Elizabethan age. As many as two hundred have been reckoned who gave evidence of skill in constructing verse.

It is, besides, a special distinction of the same age that it produced translations of unusual excellence. The finest of them, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of **George Chapman** (1557-1634), appeared early in the seventeenth century. They have won the enthusiastic admiration of several generations of poets, from Waller to Keats. "The earnestness and passion," says Charles Lamb, "which he has put into every part of these poems would be incredible to a reader of more modern translations."

But the grandest phenomenon of the epoch of Elizabeth is the Drama, and to it we shall now address ourselves.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DAWN OF THE DRAMA.

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SPAIN and England alone, among all the modern civilized nations, possess a theatrical literature independent in its origin, characteristic in its form, and reflecting faithfully the moral, social, and intellectual features of the people among whom it arose. The dawning of the English dramatic literature can be traced to a period not far removed from the Norman Conquest; for the custom of representing, in a rude dramatic form, legends of the lives of the saints and striking episodes of Bible History, existed as early as the twelfth century. To these the name of **Mysteries** or **Miracle-plays** was given. The earliest on record is the *Play of St. Catherine*, which was represented at Dunstable in 1119, written in French, and was in all probability a rude dramatized picture of the  
1119.] miracles and martyrdom of that saint. These performances were an expedient employed by the clergy for giving religious instruction to the people, and for extending and strengthening the influence of the Church by gratifying the curiosity of rude hearers. At first the plays were composed and acted by monks; the cathedral was transformed for the nonce into a theatre, the stage was a graduated platform in three divisions—representing Heaven, Earth, and Hell—rising one over the other, and the costumes were furnished from the vestry of the church. The simple faith of the monkish dramatists, and of their audience, saw no impropriety in representing the most supernatural beings, the persons of the Trinity, angels, devils, saints, and martyrs. It was absolutely necessary that some comic element should be introduced to enliven the graver scenes; and this was supplied by representing the wicked personages of the drama as placed in ludicrous situations; thus the Devil generally played the part of the clown or

jester, and was exhibited in a light half terrific and half farcical. The modern puppet-play of Punch is a tradition handed down from these ancient miracles, in which the Evil One was alternately the conqueror and the victim of the human Buffoon, Jester, or Vice, as he was called. The morality of the time did not prevent the use of vulgar or of profane language.

Some idea of these religious dramas may be formed from their titles. The *Creation of the World*, the *Fall of Man*, the story of *Cain and Abel*, the *Crucifixion of Our Lord*, the *Massacre of the Innocents*, *The Play of the Blessed Sacrament*, the *Deluge*, are in the list, besides an infinite multitude of subjects taken from the lives and miracles of the saints. The plays are generally written in mixed prose and verse; and, though abounding in absurdities, they contain passages of simple and natural pathos, and scenes of genuine, if not very delicate, humor. In the *Deluge*, a comic scene is produced by the refusal of Noah's wife to enter the Ark, and by the beating which terminates her resistance and scolding; whilst, on the other hand, a mystery entitled the *Sacrifice of Isaac* contains a pathetic dialogue between Abraham and his son. The oldest manuscript of a miracle-play in English is that of the *Harrowing of Hell*, i. e., the Conquering of Hell by Christ, believed to have been written about 1350.

The Miracle-play is not quite extinct even yet; in the retired valleys of Catholic Switzerland, in the Tyrol, and in some seldom visited districts of Germany, the peasants still annually perform dramatic spectacles representing episodes in the life of Christ. The Mysteries, once the only form of dramatic representation, continued to be popular from the eleventh to the end of the fourteenth century, when they were supplanted by another kind of representation, called **The Moralities**. The subjects of these new dramas, instead of being purely religious, were moral, as their name implies; and their ethical lessons were conveyed by action of an allegorical kind. Instead of the Deity and his angels, the saints, the patriarchs, and the characters of the Old and New Testament, the persons who figure in the Moralities are, Every-Man, a general type or expression of humanity — Lusty Juventus, who represents the follies and weaknesses of youth — Good Counsel, Repentance, Gluttony, Pride, Avarice, and the like. The same necessity existed as before for the introduction of comic scenes. The Devil was therefore retained;



and his hard blows and scoldings with the Vice, furnished many "a fit of mirth."\* The oldest English Moral-play now extant is *The Castle of Perseverance*, which was written about 1450. It is a dramatic allegory of human life, representing the many conflicting influences that surround man in his way through the world. Another, called *Lusty Juventus*, contains a vivid and humorous picture of the extravagance and debauchery of a young heir, surrounded by the Virtues and the Vices, and ends with a demonstration of the inevitable misery which follows a departure from the path of virtue and religion.

Springing from the Moralities, and bearing some general resemblance to them, though exhibiting a nearer approach to the regular drama, are the *Interludes*, a class of compositions in dialogue, much shorter in extent and more merry and farcical. They were generally played in the intervals of a festival, and were exceedingly fashionable about the time when the great controversy was raging between the Catholic Church and the reformed religion in England. The most noted author of these grotesque and merry pieces was **John Heywood**, a man of learning and accomplishment, who seems to have performed the duties of entertainer at the court of Henry VIII. His *Four P's* is a good specimen of this phase of the drama. It turns upon a dispute between a Peddler, a Pardoner, a Palmer and a Poticary, in which each tries to tell the greatest lie. They tax their powers, until at last, by chance, the Palmer says that he never saw a woman out of temper; whereupon the others declare his lie the greatest that can be told, and acknowledge him the victor.

The national taste for dramatic entertainments was still further fostered by those *pageants* which were often employed to gratify the vanity of citizens, or to compliment an illustrious visitor. On

\* "As for the Vice, he commonly acted the part of a broad, rampant jester and buffoon, full of mad pranks and mischief-making, liberally dashed with a sort of tumultuous, swaggering fun. He was arrayed in fantastic garb, with something of drollery in its appearance, so as to aid the comic effect of his action, and armed with a dagger of lath, perhaps as symbolical that his use of weapons was but to the end of provoking his own defeat. Therewithal he was vastly given to cracking ribald and saucy jokes with and upon the devil, and treating him in a style of coarse familiarity and mockery; and a part of his ordinary business was to bestride the Devil, and beat him till he roared, and the audience roared with him; the scene ending with his being carried off to Hell on the Devil's back."—*Hudson: Shakespeare's Life, Art and Characters*, Vol. I., p. 73.

some lofty platform, in the porch or churchyard of a cathedral, in the Town Hall or over the city gate, a number of figures suitably dressed, accompanied their action with poetical declamation and music. The Prophets and Saints who welcomed the royal stranger in the thirteenth century with barbarous Latin hymns, were gradually supplanted by the Virtues; and these, in their turn, made way for the Cupids, the Muses, and other classical personages, whose influence has continued almost to the literature of our own time. Such spectacles were of course frequently exhibited at the Universities, where the Latin tongue was invariably employed and Latin plays were imitated. These dramas, however, do not appear to have exercised any appreciable influence on the growth of the English stage.

We have now traced the progress of the dramatic art from its rude infancy in England, and have seen how every step of that advance removed it farther from a purely religious character. The last step of the progress was the creation of a drama which gives a scenic representation of historical events and of social life. It was about the middle of the sixteenth century that activity of creation was first perceptible in this direction. **John Bale** (1495-1563), the author of many semi-polemical plays, set the example of extracting materials for rude dramas from the chronicles of his native country. His *King John* occupies an intermediate place between the Moralities and the historical plays. But the earliest composition in our language that possesses all the requisites of a regular tragedy, and the first that is written in blank verse, is the play of *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, written by **Thomas Sackville** \* (the principal writer in the "Mirror for Magistrates"), and acted in 1562 for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth. Its subject is borrowed from the old half-mythological Chronicles of Britain. The dialogue of *Gorboduc* is regularly and carefully constructed; but it is totally destitute of variety of pause, and consequently is unnatural. The sentence almost invariably terminates with the line; and the effect of the whole is tedious; the action also is oppressively tragic, being a monotonous, dismal succession of slaughters, ending with the desolation of an entire kingdom.

The first English comedy was *Ralph Royster Doyster*, acted in

\* One Thomas Norton is said to have been the author of the first three acts of this play, but his claim is disputed.

1551] 1551, and written by **Nicholas Udall**, master of Eton College. This was followed, about fifteen years later, by *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, composed by **John Still**, afterwards a bishop, who had previously been master of St. John's and Trinity Colleges in Cambridge. This play was probably acted by the students of those colleges. Both these works are curious and interesting, not only as the oldest specimens of the class of literature to which they belong, but also in some measure from their intrinsic merit. The action of the former and better comedy takes place in London. The principal characters are a rich and pretty widow, her lover, and an insuppressible suitor, who gives the title to the play. This ridiculous pretender to gayety and love is betrayed into all sorts of absurd and humiliating scrapes. The piece ends with the return of the favored lover from a voyage which he had undertaken in a momentary pique. The manners represented are those of the middle class of the period; and the picture given of life in London in the sixteenth century is curious, animated, and natural. The language is lively, and the dialogue is carried on in loose doggerel rhyme, very well adapted to represent comic conversation. The plot of this drama is well imagined, and the reader's curiosity is kept alive.

*Gammer Gurton's Needle* is a composition of a much lower and more farcical order. The scene is laid in the humblest rustic life, and all the *dramatis personæ* belong to the uneducated class. The principal action of the comedy is the sudden loss of a needle with which Gammer (Good Mother) Gurton has been mending a garment of her man Hodge, a loss comparatively serious when needles were rare and costly. The whole intrigue consists in the search instituted after this unfortunate little implement, which is at last discovered by Hodge himself, on suddenly sitting down, sticking in the garment which Gammer Gurton had been repairing.

As yet there were neither regular theatres nor professional actors. Plays were performed in town-halls, court-yards of inns, cock-pits, and noblemen's dining-halls; and the parts were taken by amateurs. Soon, however, companies of actors, singers, and tumblers, calling themselves the servants of some nobleman whose livery they wore, were formed, and wandered about the country, performing wherever they could find an audience. Protected by the livery of their master against the severe laws which

branded strollers as vagabonds, they sought the patronage of the civil authorities. Records of the municipal bodies and the household registers of illustrious families abound in entries of permissions granted to such strolling companies, and of moneys given to them. The most interesting of these entries is found in the municipal records of Stratford-upon-Avon, from which we learn that the players visited that place for the first time, in 1569. Their performance was probably given under the patronage of Shakespeare's father, who was high-bailiff of the town in that year.

1576.] But in the year 1576, under the powerful patronage of the Earl of Leicester, James Burbadge built the first English theatre. The venture proved so successful, that twelve theatres were soon furnishing entertainment to the citizens of London. Of these the most celebrated was "The Globe." It was so named because its sign bore the effigy of Atlas supporting the globe, with the motto, "*Totus Mundus agit Histrionem*," and was situated in Southwark, near London Bridge. The majority of the London theatres were on the southern or Surrey bank of the Thames, in order to be out of the jurisdiction of the city, whose officers and magistrates, being under the influence of the severe doctrines of Puritanism, carried on a constant war against the players and the play-houses. Some of these theatres were cock-pits (the name of "the pit" still suggests the association); some were arenas for bull-baiting and bear-baiting; and, compared with the magnificent theatres of the present day, all were poor and squalid, retaining in their form and arrangements many traces of the old model—the inn-yard. Most of the theatres were entirely uncovered,\* excepting over the stage, where a thatched roof protected the actors from the weather. The spectators were exposed to sunshine and to storm. The boxes, or "rooms," as they were then styled, were arranged nearly as in the present day; but the musicians, instead of being placed in the orchestra, were in a lofty gallery over the stage.

The most remarkable peculiarities of the early English theatres were the total absence of painted or movable scenery, and the necessity that the parts for women should be performed by men or boys, actresses being as yet unknown. A few screens of cloth or

\* Shakespeare's company owned the Blackfriars Theatre and the Globe. During the winter the company played in the former, which was the smaller and entirely roofed over; but during the summer they used the Globe.

tapestry gave the actors the opportunity of making their exits and entrances; a placard, bearing the name of Rome, Athens, London, or Florence, as the case might be, indicated to the audience the scene of the action. Certain typical articles of furniture were used. A bed on the stage suggested a bed-room; a table covered with tankards, a tavern; a gilded chair surmounted by a canopy, and called "a state," a palace; an altar, a church, and the like. A permanent wooden structure like a scaffold, erected at the back of the stage, represented objects according to the requirements of the piece, such as the wall of a castle or besieged city, the outside of a house, or a position enabling one of the actors to overhear others without being seen himself.

Although thus scantily equipped in some respects, in costumery the early stage was lavish and splendid. "The Prologue" appeared in a long, flaming, velvet robe, made after the pattern of the Middle Ages, and all the other actors were attired in the richest dress of their own day. Its picturesqueness, instead of marring, heightened the effect. But the use of contemporary costume in plays whose action was supposed to take place in Greece, Rome, or Persia, naturally led to amazing absurdities, such as arming the assassins of Cæsar with Spanish rapiers, or furnishing Carthaginian senators with watches. Anachronisms, however, were not offensive to the uncritical spectators of those times. Certain attributes were associated with supernatural personages. A "roobe for to goo invisibell" is one of the items in an old list of properties; and in all probability the spectral armor of the Ghost in *Hamlet* was to be found in the wardrobe of the ancient theatres. The curtain is supposed to have opened perpendicularly in the middle; and besides this principal curtain, there seem to have been others occasionally drawn so as to divide the stage into several apartments.

The foregoing statements concerning the early theatre show how meagre were the material aids on which the dramatist could rely. That very poverty of the theatre was one of the conditions of the excellence of the Elizabethan dramatist. He could not depend upon the painter of scenes for any interpretation of the play, and therefore he was constrained to make his thought vigorous and his language vivid.

The performance began early in the afternoon, and was announced by flourishes of a trumpet. The prologue was generally

declaimed by its author, who was arrayed in antique costume. Black drapery hung around the stage, was the symbol of a tragedy; and rushes strewn on the stage, enabled the best patrons of the company to sit upon the floor. \* Dancing and singing took place between the acts; and, as a rule, a comic ballad, sung by a clown with accompaniment of tabor and pipe and farcical dancing, closed the entertainment.

The social position of an actor and playwright, even at the end of the sixteenth century, was not enviable. He was still regarded by many as scarcely a shade removed above the "rogues and vagabonds" of former generations; but this drawback seems to have been fully compensated for by extraordinary profits. That these were unusually great is proved, not only by historical evidence, such as the frequent allusions made by the preachers and moralists of the day to the pride, luxury, and magnificence in dress of the successful performers, but also by the rapidity with which many of them, as Shakespeare, Burbadge, and Alleyn, amassed considerable fortunes.

Notwithstanding the social discredit that attached to the actor's profession, the drama had reached such popularity, and the employment was so lucrative, that it soon became the common resort of irregular genius in search of a livelihood. Indeed nothing is more remarkable than the marvellously rapid growth of this department of our literature. It passed from infancy to maturity in a single generation. Twenty years after the appearance of the first rude tragedy, the theatre entered upon the most glorious period of its history, bursting forth into a majesty and strength without parallel in the literature of any country. This was mainly the work of a small band of poets, whose careers all began about the same time. They were most of them men of liberal education, but of dissolute lives. One or two of them left rural homes to seek their fortunes in London, and were lured by the prospect of swift gain into the new profession. They all possessed abilities of a high order. One of them, William Shakespeare, is the giant of the group, beside whom the others dwindle into comparative insignificance. These men, George Chapman, John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Kyd, are often spoken of as the predecessors of Shakespeare; but as none of them preceded him by more than a year or two, and as all were fellow-workers with him

for a time, it seems proper to style them the contemporaries of his early literary life.

The careers of these men in their general outlines were the same. They attached themselves as dramatic actors and poets to one of the numerous companies, and after a short apprenticeship passed in rewriting and rearranging plays, they gradually rose to original works, written either alone or in partnership with a brother playwright. As there was no dramatic copyright at this time, the playwrights had the strongest motive for taking every precaution that their pieces should *not* be printed, publication instantly annihilating their monopoly, and allowing rival companies to profit by their labors; and this is the reason why so few of the dramas of this period, in spite of their unequalled merit and their great popularity, were given to the press during the lives of their authors. It also explains the singularly careless execution of such copies as were printed, these having been published in many cases surreptitiously, and contrary to the wishes and interests of the author. Only the briefest mention can be made of the subordinate members of this remarkable group of writers.

**John Lyly** (1553-1601?), educated at Oxford, a man of classical culture, composed plays for the court, and pageants. His writings exhibit genius, though strongly tinged with a peculiar affectation, with which he infected the language of elegant conversation, and even of literature, till it fell under the ridicule of Shakespeare. This pedantic, superfine use of language is known as *Euphuism*.\* The name was taken from the title of one of Lyly's works, "Euphues; the Anatomy of Wit." Without drinking from this fountain of affectation, one can know its flavor from the language of Sir Piercie Shafton, in Scott's novel, "The Monastery."

**George Peele** (1552-1598?), like Lyly, had received a liberal education at Oxford. He was one of Shakespeare's fellow-actors and fellow-shareholders in the Blackfriars Theatre. His earliest work, *The Arraignment of Paris*, was printed anonymously in 1584. His most celebrated dramatic works were the *David and Bethsabe*, and *Absolom*, in which there are great richness and beauty of language, and indications of a high order of pathetic and elevated

\* "To this day every man who has anything of the coxcomb in his brain, who desires a dress for his thought more splendid than his thought, slides unconsciously into Euphuism."—*E. P. Whipple*.

emotion. His *Edward I.* is supposed to be our first historical play.

Thomas Kyd, the "sporting Kyd" of Ben Jonson, was possibly the author of the famous play called *Jeronimo*, to which, in consequence of the many recastings it received, so many authors have been ascribed. The *Spanish Tragedy*, which is a continuation of *Jeronimo*, was undoubtedly his.

Robert Greene (1560-1592) was a Cambridge man, and the author of a multitude of tracts and pamphlets on miscellaneous subjects. Sometimes they were tales, often translated or expanded from the Italian novelists; sometimes amusing exposures of the various arts of *cony-catching*, i. e. cheating and swindling, practised at that time in London, and in which, it is to be feared, Greene was personally not unversed; sometimes moral confessions, like the *Groatsworth of Wit*, or *Never too Late*, purporting to be a warning to others against the consequences of unbridled passions. In this group of dramatists his place is next below Marlowe.

But by far the most powerful genius among them was Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593). On leaving the University of Cambridge he joined a troop of actors, among whom he was remarkable for vice and debauchery; and he was strongly suspected by his contemporaries of being an atheist. His career was as short as it was disgraceful: he was stabbed in the head with his own dagger, which he had drawn in a quarrel with an antagonist, and he died of this wound at the age of thirty. His works are not numerous; but they are strongly distinguished from those of preceding and contemporary dramatists by an air of astonishing energy and elevation—an elevation, it is true, which is sometimes exaggerated, and an energy which occasionally degenerates into extravagance. He established the use of blank verse in the English drama. His first work was the tragedy of *Tamburlaine the Great*. The declamation in this piece, though sometimes bombastic, led Ben Jonson to speak of "Marlowe's mighty line." But in spite of the bombast, the piece contains many passages of great power and beauty. Marlowe's best work is the drama of *Faustus* (71), founded upon the same popular legend which Goethe adopted as the groundwork of his tragedy; and though the German poet's work is on the whole vastly superior, there is certainly no passage in the tragedy of Goethe in which terror, despair, and remorse are



painted with such a powerful hand as in the great closing scene of Marlowe's piece. The tragedy of the *Jew of Malta*, though inferior to *Faustus*, is characterized by similar merits and defects. The hero, Barabas, is the type of the Jew as he appeared to the rude and bigoted imaginations of the fifteenth century—a monster half-terrific, half-ridiculous, impossibly rich, inconceivably bloodthirsty, cunning, and revengeful, the bugbear of an age of ignorance and persecution. The intense expression of his rage, however, his triumph and his despair, give occasion for many noble bursts of Marlowe's powerful declamation. The tragedy of *Edward II.* (70), which was the last of this great poet's works, shows that in some departments of his art, and particularly that of moving terror and pity, he might, had he lived, have become no insignificant rival of Shakespeare himself.

Marlowe is honorably known in other departments of poetry also. His charming poem of *The Passionate Shepherd* had the rare distinction of being quoted by Shakespeare, and of being answered in "The Nymph's Reply," by Sir Walter Raleigh.

The merits of GEORGE CHAPMAN (1557-1634) as a translator have so entirely eclipsed his dramatic fame, that but few of his plays are now ever referred to. His *Bussy d'Amboise* is perhaps the best known of them.

Richard Grant White's admirable "Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Drama to the time of Shakespeare," and Rev. H. N. Hudson's "Historical Sketch of the Origin and Growth of the Drama in England," are the finest discussions to be found by the student upon the topic treated of in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

“I loved the man and do honor his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as day. He was indeed honest and of an open and free nature.”—*Ben Jonson*.

“And he, the man whom Nature selfe had made  
To mock herselfe and Truth to imitate.”—*Spenser*.

“Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child.”—*Milton*.

“But Shakespeare’s magic could not copied be,  
Within that circle none durst walk but he.”—*Dryden*.

“I hold a perfect comedy to be the perfection of human composition; and I firmly believe that fifty *Iliads* and *Aeneids* could be written sooner than such a character as *Falstaff*’s.”—*Horace Walpole*.

“I am always happy to meet persons who perceive the transcendent superiority of Shakespeare over all other writers.”—*R. W. Emerson*.

“I cannot account for Shakespeare’s low estimate of his own writings, except from the sublimity, the super-humanity of his genius.”—*Wordsworth*.

“Shakespeare is of no age. He speaks a language which thrills in our blood in spite of the separation of two hundred years. His thoughts, passions, feelings, strains of fancy, all are of this day as they were of his own; and his genius may be contemporary with the mind of every generation for a thousand years to come.”—*Prof. Wilson*.

“More full of wisdom and ridicule and sagacity than all the moralists and satirists that ever existed, Shakespeare is more mild, airy and inventive, and more pathetic and fantastic, than all the poets of all regions and ages of the world, and has all those elements so happily mixed up in him, and bears his high faculties so temperately, that the most severe reader cannot complain of him for want of strength or of reason, nor the most sensitive, for defect of ornament or ingenuity.”—*Lord Jeffrey*.

“The name of Shakespeare is the greatest in our literature—it is the greatest in all literature. No man ever came near him in the creative powers of the mind; no man ever had such strength at once, and such variety of imagination. Coleridge has most felicitously applied to him a Greek epithet, given before to I know not whom, certainly none so deserving of it,—*μυρίοψος*, the *thousand-souled Shakespeare*.”—*Hallam*.

"I think most readers of Shakespeare sometimes find themselves thrown into exalted mental conditions like those produced by music. Then they may drop the book to pass at once into the region of thoughts without words."—*O. W. Holmes.*

"Whatever other learning he wanted, he was master of two books unknown to many profound readers, though books which the last conflagration alone can destroy,—I mean the Book of Nature and that of Man."—*Edward Young.*

**T**HE authentic biography of the most famous writer in English literature is very brief. The following facts can be positively stated about **William Shakespeare**: John and Mary Shakespeare were his parents. He was christened in the little town of Stratford-on-Avon, **1564.**] in Warwickshire, England, the 26th day of April, 1564. He was married when eighteen years old. Three years after his marriage he went from Stratford to London. He was an actor, and one of the proprietors of the Globe Theatre. Ben Jonson was his intimate acquaintance. His last years were spent in his native place, where he was one of the influential citizens. He was once a plaintiff in a suit-at-law. He died on the 23d day of April, 1616.

Tradition tells that he was a man of fine form and features, that he was sometimes too convivial, that he was beloved by nearly all who knew him, that he had the personal acquaintance of Elizabeth and James I. His father, John Shakespeare, probably a glover, had married an heiress, Mary Arden or Arderne, whose family had figured in the courtly and warlike annals of preceding reigns; and thus in the veins of the great poet of humanity ran blood derived from both the aristocratic and popular portions of the community.

That John Shakespeare had been in flourishing circumstances is proved by his having long been one of the Aldermen of Stratford, and by his having served in the office of Bailiff or Mayor in 1569. Mary Arderne had brought her husband a small property. This acquisition seems to have tempted him to engage, without experience, in agricultural

pursuits, which ended disastrously in his being obliged at different times to mortgage and sell, not only his farm, but even one of the houses in Stratford of which he had been owner. He at last retained nothing save that small, but now venerable dwelling, consecrated to all future ages by being the spot where the greatest of poets was born. His distresses appear to have become severe in 1579; and he was unable to extricate himself from his embarrassments, until his son had gained a position of competence, and even of affluence.

That William Shakespeare could have derived even the most elementary instruction from his parents is impossible; for neither of them could write—an accomplishment, however, which, it should be remarked, was comparatively rare in Elizabeth's reign. But there existed at that time, and there exists at the present day, in the borough of Stratford, an endowed "free grammar-school;" and it is inconceivable that John Shakespeare, Alderman and Past Bailiff as he was, should have neglected the opportunity for educating his son. This opportunity, together with the extensive though irregular reading of which his works give evidence, and with the vague tradition that he had been "in his youth a schoolmaster in the country," renders it more than probable that the poet enjoyed a degree of culture higher than some would give him credit for. It has been reasonably inferred that during his early years he must have been a student in the office of a lawyer; for throughout his works he shows extraordinary knowledge of the technical language of the law.

The most familiar of the legends concerning him represents his youth as wild and irregular, and tells of a deer-stealing expedition in company with riotous young fellows, to Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlcote, near Stratford. According to the story Shakespeare was seized, brought before the indignant justice of the peace and flogged. For

this indignity he revenged himself by writing a satiric ballad and attaching it to the gates of Charlcote.\* Then the wrath of the Knight blazed so high that Shakespeare sought refuge in London, where he earned his livelihood by holding horses at the doors of the theatres, until his wit attracted the notice of the actors and gained him a position where by degrees he became a celebrated actor and author. We must discredit one part of the legend, inasmuch as boats—not horses—furnished conveyance across the Thames from the city to the theatres. But even though the story about the deer-stealing may have a foundation of truth, Shakespeare's departure from Stratford and his entrance into theatrical life in London may be explained in a different and less improbable manner.

He was then twenty-two years of age. He had been married three years to Anne Hathaway, a young woman seven years his senior.† His three children had been born. It was necessary to provide means for the support of his family, and that, too, without delay; for his father's wealth was nearly gone. London was the resort for such a needy adventurer as he in search of fortune; and the theatrical profession, with its ready reward for the successful actor, was the most alluring calling for him. His native taste for the drama must have been attracted to that calling before this time, for troops of actors had made frequent visits to Stratford; moreover the greatest tragic actor of the day, Richard Burbadge, was a Warwickshire man, and Thomas Greene, a

\* For a discussion of this legend, and for a stanza of the ballad, see *White's Memoirs of Shakespeare*, p. xxxvi., seq.

† There are several facts which seem to indicate that the married life of the poet was not brightened by love. Bitter allusions to marriages like his own occur in his works; during the long period of his residence in London, his wife did not live with him; and in his will he leaves her only his "second-best bed with furniture." The significance of the slighting bequest is diminished by the fact that as his property was chiefly in land her legal right to one-third gave her a large estate. But, on the other hand, several most tenderly loving passages in his poems seem unintelligible unless interpreted as addressed to her. For a discussion of the respective sides of this question see *White's Memoirs of Shakespeare*, p. xxix., seq., and *Hudson's Life of Shakespeare* p. 19, seq.

distinguished member of the troop of the Globe, then the first theatre in London, was a native of Stratford. And so, as the companies of actors were always ready to enlist men of talent, it happened that when Shakespeare arrived in London he naturally entered the service of one of those companies. Like other young men of that time, he made himself useful to his company both as an actor and as a re-writer of dramatic pieces; and his early professional career differed in no respect from that of Marlowe and others, save in the industry and success with which he pursued it, and in the prudence with which he accumulated wealth. By adapting old plays to the demands of his theatre he acquired that masterly knowledge of stage-effect, and discovered the inimitable dramatic genius which enabled him to write the grandest dramas in the literature of the world. His theatrical career continued from 1586 until 1611 (?), a period of twenty-five years, including the vivacity and charm of his youth and the dignity and glory of his manhood.

The dramatic company to which Shakespeare belonged was the most respectable and the most prosperous of that time. By carefully avoiding political allusions and by gaining the patronage of influential men, it secured unusual freedom from the interference of the authorities of the city. In this company Shakespeare reached a high position. To his good sense, prudence, and knowledge of the world its success was chiefly due; for no sooner had he retired from the theatre than repeated causes of complaint arose, and severe penalties were inflicted by the authorities upon his former comrades.

Shakespeare quickly rose to such importance in his profession as to call down upon him the attacks of disappointed rivals; for, in 1592, Greene makes bitter allusion to his name, accuses him of plagiarism, and plainly shows that envy dictated the attack. The scurrilous pamphlet con-

taining this accusation was published after Greene's death, and evidently provoked criticism by its meanness. Chettle, its editor, promptly published an apology in which he says of Shakespeare,—“I am as sorry as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myself have seene his demeanor no less civill than he excelent in the quality he professes: besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty, and his facetious [felicitous] grace in writing that approves his art.”

That he was profoundly acquainted with his art is clear from the inimitable “directions to the players” put into the mouth of Hamlet, which, in incredibly few words, contain its whole system. We have good authority for supposing that he acted the Ghost in his tragedy of *Hamlet* (81), the graceful and touching character of Adam, the faithful old servant, in his *As You Like It* (72), the deeply pathetic impersonation of grief and despair in the popular tragedy of *Hieronimo*, and the sensible citizen, Old Knowell, in Ben Jonson's *Every Man In His Humor*. A contemporary reference ascribes to him some degree of excellence in the performance of kingly characters. But the first masterly actor of the great tragic characters, Richard III., Hamlet, Othello, and the others, was Shakespeare's comrade, Richard Burbadge.

Shakespeare's reputation grew apace. Six years after his arrival in London, he had won his way to the foremost rank of literary men. The learned and the brilliant had been his competitors, and yet he had outstripped them all. He was already wielding potent influence. Riches were flowing into his hands. The gifted and the noble applauded him, and sought his society. The young Earl of Southampton is said to have expressed his admiration for the worth and the genius of the poet by making him the princely gift of a thousand pounds. Through succeeding years his prosperity continued. In 1597, at the age of

thirty-three, he purchased "New Place," the finest house in Stratford, making it a home for his family, and a refuge for his parents.\* In 1602 he purchased one hundred and seven acres of land, and at about the same time he invested four hundred and forty pounds in the tithes of Stratford. In 1611 (?) he sold his interest in the Globe Theatre, left London, and withdrew to the quietude of his home. There five years were spent in a leisure that must have been a strange contrast to the busy, thronging cares that had attended his professional life. An active interest in the welfare of his town, an occasional visit to London, a generous entertainment of his friends, and the composition of

one or two of his grandest dramas, seem to have  
**1616.]** occupied these years of retirement. He died on the 23d of April, 1616, probably on the anniversary of his birthday, having just completed his fifty-second year. There is a tradition that he rose from a sick-bed to entertain Ben Jonson and Drayton, and that he brought on a relapse by "drinking too hard." He was buried in the parish church of Stratford. In the wall, above his grave, a monument is erected, containing his bust.† This bust and the coarse engraving by Droeshout, prefixed to the first folio edition of his works published in 1623, are the most trustworthy of his portraits. In eulogistic verses Ben Jonson vouches for the faithfulness of Droeshout's picture.

But few relics of Shakespeare still remain. The house of New Place has long been destroyed; but the garden in

\* It was Shakespeare's ambition to gain the rank and title of "gentleman;" and, therefore, at about the time when he bought New Place he solicited a coat of arms for his father. His own defamed profession would have been an obstacle in the way of his securing the honor; but he succeeded in obtaining it for his father, and so gained it for himself by inheritance. He was the last to bear the family title; for his only son, Hamnet, died when eleven years of age.

† The pavement over his grave bears the following startling inscription:

"Good friend, for Iesvs sake forbear,  
 To digg the dvst encloased heare:  
 Bleste be ye man yt spares thes stones,  
 And cvrst be he yt moves my bones."



which it stood, and, in another street, the house where the poet was born, are preserved. His will, which was made a month before his death, testifies to his kind and affectionate disposition. To each of his old comrades and "fellows" he leaves some token of regard, generally "twenty-six shillings and eight pence apiece, to buy them rings." The three autographs attached to this document, and one or two more, are the only specimens of his writing that have been preserved.\*

Shakespeare's first original poems were not dramatic. He was the creator of a peculiar species of narrative composition, which achieved an immediate and immense popularity. (*Venus and Adonis*), which, in his dedication to Lord Southampton, he calls "the first heir of his invention," was published in 1593. It is probable that this poem—exhibiting all the luxuriant sweetness, the voluptuous tenderness, of a youthful genius—was conceived, if not composed, at Stratford. It was re-issued in five several editions between the years 1593 and 1602; while the *Rape of Lucrece*, during nearly the same time, appeared in three. When he began to be conscious of his vast powers, and abandoned the adaptation of old plays for original dramatic composition, it is quite impossible to ascertain; for some of the works which bear the strongest impress of his genius were undoubtedly based upon earlier productions. As examples of this may be mentioned *Hamlet* (81, 82), *Henry V.*, and *King John* (77).

There are internal evidences which indicate his earlier and his later plays, but nothing from which a chronological list could be made. To obtain such a list, many acute investigators have exercised their ingenuity, and have found

\* "The manner in which the name is spelled in the old records varies almost to the extreme capacity of various letters to produce a sound approximating to that of the name as we pronounce it. \* \* \* But Shakespeare himself, and his careful friend Ben Jonson, when they printed the name, spelled it *Shake-speare*, the hyphen being often used; and in this form it is found in almost every book of their time in which it appeared."—*White's Memoirs of William Shakespeare*, p. iv., note.

startling discrepancies in their results. No reliance can be placed upon the order of the pieces given in the first edition—the folio published in 1623 by Heminge and Condell, Shakespeare's friends. The most superficial examination is sufficient to prove that, in spite of the assurances of the editors as to its having been based upon the "papers" of their colleague, this publication must be regarded as little better than a hasty speculation, entered into for the sake of profit and without much regard to the literary reputation of the great poet. And though the system of grouping plays as Tragedies, Comedies, and Histories, has at all events the advantage of clearness, and is that upon which most editions of the dramas are based, it also is open to objection. Some of the pieces indeed (such as *Othello*, *Lear*, *Hamlet*) (81, 82) are distinctly tragedies, and others (*As You Like It* (72) or *Twelfth Night*) are as decidedly comedies; but many more might, from their tones and incidents, be ranged under either head. Indeed, in all, the tragic and comic elements are more or less intermixed, and it is this blending of the two in the same piece which constitutes the distinguishing trait of the English drama in the Shakespearean age, and gives it peculiar excellence and title to superiority over the national drama of every other country.

For us, the most useful mode of classification is based upon the *sources* from which Shakespeare drew the materials for his dramas. Those sources are *historical* and *fictional*. The historical plays were intended to depict events of recent reigns in England. Holinshed's Chronicles furnished much of the material for them, beginning with *King John* (77), and ending with *Henry VIII.* (79, 80). They are grand panoramas of national glory or national distress. *Richard II.*, *Richard III.* (78), the two unequalled dramas on the reign of *Henry IV.* and that chant of patriotic triumph, *Henry V.*, illustrate his power in

representing epochs in the life of his nation. Shakespeare, though not the inventor, was the most prolific author of such historical dramas.

In addition to the plays founded on authentic facts of history, he wrote many which had a semi-historical character, and drew their stories from the legendary lore of various countries; thus *Hamlet* was taken from a Danish chronicler; *Macbeth*, *Lear* and *Cymbeline* refer to more or less fabulous legends of Scottish and British history; while *Coriolanus*, *Julius Cæsar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are derived from ancient Roman annals.

Nineteen of his dramas are based upon *fiction*. Of these a large majority can be traced to the Italian novelists and their imitators, who supplied the light literature of the sixteenth century. The short tales of those writers were most singularly adapted to furnish an appropriate groundwork for the poet's humorous or pathetic actions. They were exceedingly short. They depended for their popularity upon amusing and surprising incidents; and the playwright, therefore, enjoyed full liberty for the exercise of his peculiar talent of portraying human character, having ready to his hand a series of striking events which he could compress or expand as best suited his purpose. In no instance has Shakespeare taken the trouble of inventing a plot for himself. Appropriating without hesitation materials already prepared, he directed all his energies to that department in which he shines unrivalled,—the portrayal of human nature and human passion. We are not, however, to infer that the poet necessarily consulted the tales in the original language. A careful examination of his works seems to prove that he has rarely made use of any ancient or foreign literature not then existing in English translations; a fact which lends some corroboration to the well-known statement of Ben Jonson that he had "small Latin and less Greek."

*A Classification of Shakespeare's Plays, the Probable Dates of their Composition, and the Sources whence the Materials were Derived.*

## II.—HISTORICAL.

PLAYS.	PROBABLE DATE OF COMPOSITION.	SOURCES FROM WHICH MATERIALS WERE DERIVED.
Henry VI., Part I.....	1590-91	{ Old play, entitled <i>The Contention between the Famous Houses of York and Lancaster</i> ; and the <i>True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York</i> .
“ “ “ II.....		
“ “ “ III.....		
Richard II.....	1594-5	Holinshed's Chronicles. The Chronicles of Hall and of Holinshed. An older play.
“ III. (78).....		
King John (77).....	1596	{ An old play, entitled <i>The Famous Victories of King Henry V</i> .
Henry IV., Part I.....	1596	
“ “ II.....	1597	
Henry V.....	1599	{ The Chronicles of Hall and of Holinshed, and Fox's <i>Book of Martyrs</i> .
Henry VIII. (79, 80).....	1613	

## II II.—SEMI-HISTORICAL, OR LEGENDARY.

Titus Andronicus.....	1587-9	Probably an older play.
<u>Hamlet</u> (81, 82).....	1600	{ The Chronicle of Saxo-Grammaticus, and an older play.
King Lear.....	1605	Holinshed and older plays.
Macbeth (84, 85).....	1605	Holinshed's Chronicles of Scotland.
<u>Julius Cæsar</u> (83).....	1606-8	North's Translation of Plutarch's Lives.
Antony and Cleopatra.....	1606-8	
Coriolanus.....	1609-11	
Cymbeline.....	1609-11	
		Boccaccio and Holinshed.

## III.—FICTIONAL.

Love's Labour's Lost.....	1588-9	Unknown; probably of French origin.
<u>Comedy of Errors</u> .....	1589	The <i>Menæchmi</i> of Plautus.
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	1589-90	Unknown.
A Midsummer Night's Dream (75, 76, 87).....		
<u>The Merchant of Venice</u> (74).....	1594	<i>Il Pecorone</i> , an Italian tale.
Romeo and Juliet.....	1596	Paynter's <i>Palace of Pleasure</i> .
Much Ado about Nothing.....	1593-9	An Italian novel.
Twelfth-Night.....	1599	An Italian novel, by Bandello.
As You Like It (72, 73).....	1599	Lodge's <i>Rosalynde</i> .
The Taming of the Shrew.....	1601	An older play.
Pericles.....	1602	{ Gower's <i>Confessio Amantis</i> , and The <i>Patterne of Painfull Adventures</i> .
Merry Wives of Windsor.....	1603	Unknown.
Measure for Measure.....	1603-4	Cinthio's <i>Hecatommithi</i> .
All's Well that Ends Well.....	1604	{ Paynter's <i>Palace of Pleasure</i> , translated from Boccaccio.
Timon of Athens.....	1605-7	{ Plutarch, Lucian, and <i>The Palace of Pleasure</i> .
Troilus and Cressida.....	1606-8	{ Chancer and Caxton's <i>Recuyell of the Histories of Troy</i> .
Othello.....	1609-11	Cinthio's <i>Hecatommithi</i> .
The Winter's Tale.....	1611	Greene's <i>Pandosto</i> ; <i>The Triumph of Time</i> .
<u>The Tempest</u> (86).....	1611	Unknown.

From this classification it will be seen that many of these plays were based upon preceding dramatic works. A few of the more ancient pieces themselves are preserved, exhibiting different degrees of imperfection and barbarism. In one or two cases we have more than one edition of the same play in its different stages towards complete perfection under the hand of Shakespeare. *Hamlet* is the most notable instance. Some of these thirty-seven plays show evident marks of an inferior hand. The three parts of *Henry VI.* were in all probability older dramas, retouched and vivified here and there with Shakespeare's inimitable strokes of nature and poetic fancy. So, too, the last of the English historical plays, *Henry VIII.* (79, 80), bears many traces of having been in part composed by a different author; in the diction, the turn of thought, and in the peculiar structure of the verse, there are indications that in its composition Shakespeare was associated with another poet. Such literary partnership was in vogue in that age.

On reading Shakespeare's historical dramas the first impression is of the amazing apprehension and ready delineation of the peculiarities of the age and country which the poet reproduces. He gave an intense humanity, a reality, to every character in the play. From the most prominent down to the most obscure, each one has a distinct individuality,—true at the same time to that individuality, to his nation, and to the universal man. There may be, here and there, anachronisms, but they never affect the truthfulness of the poet's representation of human nature. A hero of the Trojan War may quote Aristotle, or Cæsar's Romans may wield the Spanish rapier of the sixteenth century; but the language and the thought are true to the speaker's age and nation. Even the influence of climate is not forgotten in his creations. Take the characters of Ophelia and Juliet as types of the woman of the North and the woman of the South. Both are in love. As you read through the pages

on which Ophelia lives, you find yourself communing with an honest woman, whose sincerity, and constancy, and depth of soul, you recognize and admire. She speaks few words and they are very quietly spoken. Yet, beneath the undemonstrative manner you detect the strongest yearnings for the love of him whom she loves. When she discovers that her love is reciprocated, though she is chary of her words, you detect the earnestness of her delight. Then her trials come. Her lover is separated from her. Her cruel fortune is patiently borne until her reason is dethroned. Then, even in her insanity, her nature is true to its clime. There is still reserve. Her grief finds little utterance in her own throbbing words, but sings itself to rest in snatches of songs and in the words of other tongues. Her emotional nature is under control. Her anxiety, her joy, her grief are alike subdued by the reserve that is natural to the Northerner.

Juliet stands in striking contrast. No calm exterior hides her impulsive life. Her love comes suddenly to its full expression. Her womanliness appears in a nature that is profound, though easily moved; in a constancy of love, though that love would seem to expend itself in demonstration. Her utterances of feeling, her rapturous words, her earnest action, are the index of her deepest emotions. Her womanliness is as pure as Ophelia's. She is simply true to the impulsive nature of the Southerner. Further illustration of Shakespeare's faithfulness to the nature of character cannot be given in this book; nor is there need of further illustration, if in the examples named we find the fulfillment of that most difficult of dramatic tasks,—the faultless representation of womanliness, and fidelity in appropriating an influence as subtle as that of climate. Other dramatists make simpering fools or loud braggarts of their women; Shakespeare portrays humanity in woman as successfully as in man, and thereby gains much of his pre-eminence.

His *mode* of delineating passion is unique. Others fall

more or less into the error of making their personages mere embodiments of moral qualities,—of ambition, of avarice, of hypocrisy. They accumulate in their creations only kindred characteristics. Shakespeare never forgets the infinite complexity of human nature. As Macaulay justly observes, the primary characteristic of Shylock is revengefulness; but a closer insight discloses a thousand other qualities, whose mutual play and varying intensity go to compose the complex being that Shakespeare has drawn in the terrible Jew. Othello is no mere impersonation of jealousy, nor Macbeth of ambition, nor Falstaff of selfish gayety, nor Timon of misanthropy, nor Imogen of wifely love: in each of these personages, the more closely we analyze them, the deeper and more multiform will appear the infinite springs of action which make up their personality. To this wonderful power of conceiving complex character may be attributed another distinguishing peculiarity of our poet, namely, the total absence in his works of any tendency to self-reproduction. From his dramas we learn nothing whatever of his own sympathies and tendencies. He is absolutely impersonal, or rather he is all persons in turn; for no poet ever possessed to a like degree the power of successively identifying himself with a multitude of the most diverse individualities, and of identifying himself so completely that we cannot detect a trace of preference. Shakespeare, when he has once thrown off such a character as Othello, never recurs to it again. Othello disappears from the stage as completely as a real Othello would disappear from the world, and leaves behind him no similar personage. He has given us other pictures of jealous men: Leontes, Ford, Posthumus, all are equally so; but how differently is the passion manifested in each of these! In the characters of women too, what a wonderful range, what inexhaustible variety!\* In no class of his imper-

\* "It would be very gratifying, no doubt, perhaps very instructive also, to be let into the domestic life and character of the poet's mother. That both her nature

sonations are the depth, the delicacy, and the extent of Shakespeare's creative power more visible than in his women; and this is all the more wonderful when we remember that in drawing these exquisitely varied types of character, he knew that they would be intrusted in representation to boys or young men—no woman having acted on the stage till long after the age which witnessed such creations as Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, and Juliet. The author must have felt what he so powerfully expressed in the language of his own Cleopatra:

"The quick comedians  
Extemporary shall stage us: Antony  
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra *boy* my greatness."

These Shakespearean characters—men or women—do not appear as pictures on the page of a book. We come to know them, not from descriptions of them, but by actual intercourse with them. They live. They talk in our presence;—some of them rude, grotesque, eccentric; some of them grand and energetic; some of them in the various phases of insanity; but all of them *real*. This is Shakespeare's miraculous power, that he makes realities out of that which others make into pictures or dreams. We have been in the Roman Senate and have seen Julius Cæsar bleed away his life. King Lear is not a man about whom we have simply read. He is a man in whose presence we have been, whose folly has disgusted us, whose rage has startled us, whose despair has stirred the deepest depths of our pity.

In the expression of strong emotion, as well as in the delineation of character, Shakespeare is superior to all other poets. He never produces the effect he desires by violent

and her discipline entered largely into his composition, and had much to do in making him what he was, can hardly be questioned. Whatsoever of woman's beauty and sweetness and wisdom was expressed in her life and manners could not but be caught and repeated in his susceptible and fertile mind. He must have grown familiar with the noblest parts of womanhood somewhere; and I can scarce conceive how he should have learned them so well, but that the light and glory of them beamed upon him from his mother."—*Hudson's Life of Shakespeare*, p. 14.



rhetoric, nor by unnatural combinations of qualities. He instructs and interests us by exhibiting passions and feelings as we see them in the world. In his finest passages he draws illustrations from simple and familiar objects. Sometimes his natural fondness for making subtle distinctions, sometimes his passion for punning, does violence to our notions of good taste ; but it must be borne in mind that such passion was the literary vice of his day. These defects disappear in the moments of earnestness.

His style is often criticised for its obscurity. It is the profundity of his thinking and the reach of his imagination which make him subject to that criticism. He often thinks in metaphors ; and we have to discern the figure clearly, before we can apprehend his thought. The same quality of style will be noticed in Bacon ; for he, too, does his severest thinking in boldest metaphors. This habit is characteristic of the grandly poetic mind. It is simply the power of condensing much thought into brief expression. The men who have this power are they who furnish the brilliant quotations for the printed page and for elegant conversation. It is because he has that power pre-eminently, that Shakespeare is quoted more frequently than any other English writer.

It is noticeable that he left no impress upon the political life of his nation. But upon the spirit of social sympathy, upon the spirit of historical inquiry, and, most of all, upon the history of his language, his influence was potent and has been lasting. To him, more than to any other man since

Chaucer, the English language is indebted. The 1611.] common version of the Bible, made in 1611, and

the writings of Shakespeare, have been the conservators of English speech. The general reading of two volumes that are models of simplicity, of sincerity in expression, and of discrimination in the choice of words, has given to the millions of speakers of English a rich and constant vocabulary. It was nearly three centuries ago that Shakespeare

wrote, yet we read him to-day to find that, while he made the language of his predecessors obsolete, his vocabulary \* has withstood the assaults of time, and is still fresh and vigorous.

His writings are often censured on account of their obscenity. With but one or two exceptions his plays, as they are placed upon the modern stage, are much expurgated. The apology for this defect is plain and satisfactory. He was writing at a time when, in every circle of society, there was license in language. What is to us shockingly obscene in many of his passages, was no transgression of propriety in his day. In this very particular he is remarkably pure in comparison with his contemporary dramatists. That he could not have been grossly indelicate is evident to all who appreciate the tenderness with which he guards purity in his impersonations.

The *Sonnets* of Shakespeare (88) possess a peculiar interest, not only from their intrinsic beauty, but also from the fact that they contain carefully veiled allusions to the personal feelings of their author, allusions which point to some deep disappointment in love and friendship. They were first printed in 1609, though, from allusions found in contemporary writings, it is clear that many of them had been composed previously. They are one hundred and fifty-four in number. Some of them are evidently addressed to a man, while others are as plainly intended for a woman. Throughout all of them there flows a deep current of sadness, discontent, and wounded affection, which bears every mark of being the expression of a real sentiment. No clew, however, has as yet been discovered by which we may hope to trace the persons to whom these poems are addressed, or

\* "An examination of the vocabulary of Shakespeare will show that out of the fifteen thousand words which compose it, not more than five or six hundred have gone out of currency or changed their meaning, and of these, some no doubt are misprints, some borrowed from obscure provincial sources, and some, words for which there is no other authority, and which probably never were recognized as English."—*Marsh—Lectures on English Language*, p. 264

the painful events to which they allude. Had his dramatic works been unwritten, these sonnets, together with his early amatory poems, would have given him rank among the most brilliant poets of his age; but the superior glory of his dramas overshadows the minor works.

Of his plays, sixteen were printed during his lifetime, probably without his sanction. He was regardless of the fate of his works, leaving them to the mercy of speculating publishers. This indifference to the preservation of his most famous writing, his early abandonment of the stage, and some allusions in his sonnets, give much reason for thinking that he was not well pleased with his calling. The first edition of his plays, a folio edited by his former comrades, Heminge and Condell, appeared in 1623. A second edition followed in 1632, and a third in 1663. Another folio in 1685 supplied the demands of his English readers, until Nicholas Rowe published the first critical edition in 1709.

The works which he has left show such stores of knowledge, such powers of discrimination, such resources of wit, such pathos, such exhaustlessness of language, such scope of imagination, as can be found in no other English poet. Moreover, he seems to have been a symmetrical *man*. The fact that, working in a defamed profession, he commanded the respect of the worthiest; the fact that, being the most eminent of poets, he was at the same time successful in practical affairs; and the fact that, out of the resources of his mind, he has drawn every phase of humanity, indicate his own completeness and balance of character.

In the large library of volumes which discuss the life and the literature of Shakespeare, the following works and brief papers will be of special interest to the student who is beginning to form an opinion of the dramatist:—The first volume of White's edition of Shakespeare, Hudson's *Shakespeare's Life, Art, and Characters*, Whipple's essay in *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, Taine's *English Literature*, Vol. I., p. 296, seq., Reed's *British Poets*, Vol. I., Lecture V., De Quincey's Works, Vol. II., Coleridge's Works, Vol. IV., Giles's *Human Life in Shakespeare*, J. R. Lowell's essay in *My Study Windows*.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMATISTS.

THE age of Elizabeth and James I. produced a galaxy of great dramatic poets, the like of whom, whether we regard the nature or the degree of excellence exhibited in their works, the world has never seen. In the general style of their writings they bear a strong resemblance to Shakespeare; and, indeed, many of the peculiar merits of their great prototype may be discovered in his contemporaries. Intensity of pathos hardly less touching than that of Shakespeare, may be found in the dramas of Ford; gallant animation and dignity in the dialogues of Beaumont and Fletcher; deep tragic emotion in the sombre scenes of Webster; noble moral elevation in the graceful plays of Massinger; but in Shakespeare, and only in Shakespeare, do we see the consummate union of all the most opposite qualities of the poet, the observer, and the philosopher.

### BEN JONSON.

"He did a little too much Romanize our tongue."—*John Dryden.*

"Jonson possessed all the learning that was wanting to Shakespeare, and wanted all the genius which the other possessed."—*David Hume.*

"Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,  
To please in method, and invent by rule;  
His studious patience and laborious art  
By regular approach essay'd the heart."—*Samuel Johnson.*

"Many were the wit-combats betwixt him [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but

lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."—*Thomas Fuller*, 1662.

"I was yesterday invited to a solemn supper by Ben Jonson, where there was good company, excellent cheer, choice wines, and jovial welcome. One thing intervened which almost spoilt the relish for the rest—that Ben began to engross all the discourse; to vapour extremely of himself; and by vilifying others to magnify his own name. T. Ca. [Thomas Carew] buzzed me in the ear, that Ben had barrelled up a great deal of knowledge, yet it seems he had not read the ethics, which, amongst other precepts of morality, forbid self-commendations, declaring it to be an ill-favored solecism in good manners."—*James Howell*, 1636.

"There are people who cannot eat olives; and I cannot much relish Ben Jonson, though I have taken some pains to do it, and went to the task with every sort of good-will. I do not deny his power or his merit; far from it; but it is to me a repulsive and unamiable kind."—*William Hazlitt*.

**B. 1573.]** The name which stands next to that of Shakespeare  
**D. 1637.]** in this list is that of **Ben Jonson**, a vigorous and solid  
 genius (89). Although compelled by his step-father to follow the trade of a bricklayer, he succeeded in making himself one of the most learned men of the age.\* After a short service as a soldier in the Low Countries, where he distinguished himself by his courage in the field, he began his theatrical career at about twenty years of age, when we find him attached as an actor to one of the minor theatres called the Curtain. His success as a performer is said to have been very small; probably on account of his unattractiveness of person. Having killed a fellow-actor in a duel, while still a young man, he was (to use his own words) "brought near the gallows." While in prison awaiting his trial he was converted to the Roman Catholic faith; but twelve years afterwards he returned to the Protestant Church.

Jonson, like Shakespeare, probably began his dramatic work by recasting old plays. His first original piece, the comedy *Every Man in His Humor*, is assigned to the year 1596. As first represented it was a failure, and Shakespeare, then at the height of his popularity, is said to have interested himself in behalf of the young

\* The story is told of Jonson that his fondness for study tempted him to carry books in his pocket while working at his trade, in order that he might improve leisure moments by refreshing his memory upon his favorite passages in classical authors, and that one day, while working on the scaffolding of a building at Lincoln's Inn, a lawyer heard him recite a passage of Homer with surprising appreciation, was attracted to him, and, upon discovering his thirst for learning, gave him opportunities for renewing his studies at the University of Cambridge.

aspirant, suggesting changes in the play, securing its acceptance by the managers of the Globe, and himself taking a prominent part, when, two years later, it was brought out with triumphant success. Thus, probably, was laid the foundation of that sincere and enduring attachment between the two poets, which is commemorated by many pleasant anecdotes of their genial social intercourse, as well as by that enthusiastic eulogy in which Jonson has honored the genius of his friend.

Jonson's literary reputation was established by this second representation of his comedy. Henceforward for more than a quarter of a century, though the success of individual plays may have fluctuated, he held rank as the most prominent figure in the literary society of the day. His faults were the typical faults of the conceited man; his virtues were his own. Egotistical to the last degree, self-willed and overbearing, he was yet frank, generous, and social in temper, and truly upright and earnest in purpose. At the famous "wit-combats" of the Mermaid Tavern he was the self-constituted autocrat. He scrupled not to lay down the laws of the drama to Shakespeare himself. In *Every Man Out of His Humor*, and in *Cynthia's Revels*, he proclaimed his mission as a dramatic reformer; and he satirized "the ragged follies of the time" with such savage acrimony as provoked a storm of recrimination from his lampooned contemporaries. Dekker and Marston were his chief opponents in the literary war that ensued. They accused him of plagiarism, they mocked his sublimity, they questioned his learning. *The Poetaster*, *The Tale of a Tub*, and many passages in Jonson's other plays, attest the vigor with which he bore his part. Yet the same egotism which rendered him insensible to Shakespeare's influence guarded him against servile imitation, and made him, next to Shakespeare, the most original dramatist of the era; and the intrepid self-confidence which would guide, not follow, popular taste, kept his works pure from the gross immorality which stains the brightest pages of Beaumont and Fletcher. Doubtless his resolute self-assertion aided him in winning recognition for the admirable qualities of his heart and head. There is reason to believe that his social position was superior to Shakespeare's; and in an age when play-writing was hardly considered "a creditable employ," Clarendon affirms that "his conversation was very good, and with men of the best note."

Jonson's prosperity and intellectual power reached their culmination between 1603 and 1619. In the former year *The Fall of Sejanus*, a tragedy, appeared, followed in rapid succession by some of his finest works,—*Volpone*, *Epicene*, *The Alchymist*, and *Catiline*. He was frequently employed by the Court in arranging those splendid and fantastic entertainments called *masques*, in which he exhibited his stores of invention and all the resources of his profound and elegant scholarship. In 1616 he received the office of Laureate, with an annual pension of one hundred marks; and though writing little between 1619 and 1625, his fortunes suffered no material abatement until the death of James I., in 1625. Thereafter, disappointment, poverty, ill-health, and too great fondness for sack, combined their forces to break down the veteran. Many of his later plays were unsuccessful; and in one of them, *The New Inn*, acted in 1630, he complains bitterly of the hostility and bad taste of his audience. He died in 1637, and was buried in an upright posture in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. Above his grave a plain stone bears the excellent and laconic inscription, "O RARE BEN JOHNSON."\*

Jonson's dramatic works are of various degrees of merit, ranging from an excellence unsurpassed by any contemporary except Shakespeare, to the lowest point of laborious mediocrity. He seems to have won his high place among the writers of the Elizabethan era, not so much by virtue of creative imagination, or by any strictly poetic faculties, as by weight and breadth of understanding, quickness of fancy, power of analysis, and preternatural keenness of observation. Thorough and extensive study strengthened these native qualities, but could not supply the deficiencies. His tragedies, *The Fall of Sejanus* and *Catiline's Conspiracy*, display the riches of a profound and learned intellect. They reproduce the details of Roman manners, religion and sentiments, with minute fidelity, and contain passages of wonderful force and grandeur. But as wholes, they are stiff and lifeless, lacking that subtle spirit of *reality* through which Shakespeare could "transform a series of incidents into a succession of events." It is mechanical, not vital energy with which Jonson has endowed his creations. Nor is it strange that there was this difference between these two dramatists.

\* In that inscription his name is spelled "Johnson." The common spelling is "Jonson."

Shakespeare disregarded the traditional laws of dramatic poetry and wrote with unfettered hand. Free from restraint, his English nature expressed itself in a drama that was true to the spirit of his age and his nation. His plays, therefore, have what we call *reality*. Jonson, as we have said, was a profound classical scholar. He was an enraptured admirer of the great works of the classic drama. The laws by which Greek dramatists had attained their success were to him the essential laws of a true drama; and as a student of dramatic art and a dramatist, he must obey those laws. By so much as he violated them, he was false to his profession. As a proof of his earnestness in holding this opinion, read his prologue to *Every Man in his Humor*. In his attempt to be loyal to his culture he placed himself under a bondage which made it impossible for him to give characters a native freedom. Bound to observe the unities of time, place, and action,\* he could not portray life naturally.

But worse than the defects springing from Jonson's servitude to classical laws is his singular want of what is called *humanity*. His humor is never genial, his fun never infectious; his point of view is always that of the satirist. He takes his materials, both for intrigue and for character, from odious sources. For instance, the action of two of his finest plays, *Volpone* and *The Alchymist*, turns entirely upon a series of ingenious cheats and rascalities, all the persons being either scoundrels or their dupes.

Nevertheless, Jonson's knowledge is so vast, the force and vigor of his expression so unbounded, the tone of his morality so high and manly, that his plays retain a high place in literature.

As a literary man he stands alone. All critics say it; he says it. In pedantry he was as distinguished as he was for scholarship. His diction was as rotund as his figure. While you read his writings some one is continually telling you that the thoughts and the words are weighty and wonderful, and that one is Ben Jonson. He was his own ideal. He was a genuine Englishman. Shakespeare

\* Three rules were carefully observed in the composition of a Grecian Drama: 1. That there should be a distinct plot with one main action, to which all the minor parts of the play should contribute; 2. That the incidents of the play should naturally come within one day; 3. That the entire action should naturally occur in one place. These three rules are known as, the Unity of Action, the Unity of Time, and the Unity of Place, or as "the dramatic unities."



was a cosmopolite. Jonson was to Shakespeare what England is to the world. While we may smile at some of Jonson's traits, we admire the resoluteness of purpose that lies behind his self-confidence; we admire his lofty theory of virtue, though his own vices are not concealed; we admire the learning which supports his pedantry; we admire the bravery that comes to the rescue of his boasting.

It is singular that while Jonson in his plays is distinguished for that hardness and dryness which we have endeavored to point out, the same poet, in another field, should be remarkable for elegance and refinement of invention and style. In the thirty-five *Masques* and *Court Entertainments*, which he composed for the amusement of the king and the great nobles, as well as in the charming fragment of a pastoral drama entitled the *Sad Shepherd*, Jonson appears quite another man. Everything that the richest and most delicate invention could supply, aided by extensive, choice and recondite reading, is lavished upon these courtly compliments. Their gracefulness almost makes us forget their adulation and servility. Among the most beautiful of these masques we may mention *Paris Anniversary*, the *Masque of Oberon*, and the *Masque of Queens*. Besides his dramatic works, Jonson left literary remains in both prose and verse. The former portion, called *Discoveries*, contains many valuable notes on books and men—those on Shakespeare and Bacon being the most interesting.

### BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Superior to Ben Jonson in variety and animation, though not equal to him in solidity of knowledge, were **Francis Beaumont** (1586–1616) and **John Fletcher** (1576–1625), both of them by birth and by education of a higher social status than their fellow-dramatists, Beaumont being the son of a judge, and Fletcher the son of a bishop (91). Concerning the details of their lives and characters we possess but vague and scanty information; it is evident, however, that they were accomplished men, possessing a degree of scholarship amply sufficient to furnish their writings with rich allusions and abundant ornaments. The fifty-two dramatic works of these brilliant fellow-laborers are extraordinary for their excel-

lence and variety. There seems to be reason for ascribing to Beaumont more of the sublime and tragic genius, to Fletcher gayety and comic humor. Fletcher was the more prolific and versatile writer, and the volatile creativeness of his fancy may have been restrained and directed by the sounder judgment of his friend.\* But so blended is their glory that neither biography nor criticism has been able to separate their names. Their respective plays cannot be indicated with certainty, their tastes cannot be distinguished, their talents cannot be discriminated. In his generous enthusiasm, Charles Lamb praises the "noble practice" of the time when eminent authors shared each other's labors and each other's fame. It must have been a thought of the marvellous literary partnership existing between Beaumont and Fletcher that prompted his praise. A thought beyond them would have reminded him of the feuds of the Elizabethan authors, of the criminations, recriminations, and scandals of that time. Human nature had its selfishness and its jealousies then, and the great dramatists had their share of the weaknesses of human nature. Greene hated Marlowe, and was jealous of Shakespeare; Marlowe was indignant at Nash; Chapman shot poisoned arrows at Ben Jonson, and Jonson applied his cudgels to the backs of Dekker and Marston. No niche in the temple of literary fame is large enough to receive two men, save that in which Beaumont and Fletcher appear. Their partnership was formed when Beaumont was twenty and Fletcher thirty years of age, and was continued for ten years.

Their works afford constant evidence of the influence and inspiration of Shakespeare; and several of their plays, in which the graceful, humorous, and romantic elements predominate, are by no means unworthy of comparison with such comedies as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Measure for Measure*. But in the delineation of sustained passion they are immeasurably inferior to their master. The range of their character-painting is comparatively limited, and their pathos is tender rather than deep. Their

\* "There was a wonderful similarity between Mr. Francis Beaumont and Mr. John Fletcher, which caused the clearness of friendship between them. I have heard Dr. John Earle, since Bishop of Sarum, say, who knew them, that his (Beaumont's) business was to correct the superfluities of Mr. Fletcher's wit. They lived together on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse; both bachelors, had one bench of the house between them, which they did so admire, the same clothes, cloaks, etc., between them."—*Aubrey*, 1697.

numerous portraits of valiant veterans may be pronounced unequalled, and they are singularly happy in depicting noble and magnanimous feeling. It is in their pieces of mixed sentiment, containing comic matter intermingled with romantic and elevated incidents, that their powers are best displayed. Of this class, no better examples can be selected than the comedies of the *Elder Brother*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, *Beggars' Bush*, and the *Spanish Curate*. In the more violently farcical intrigues and characters, such as are to be found in the *Little French Lawyer*, the *Woman-Hater*, the *Scornful Lady*, the eccentricity is laughably extravagant; and the authors seem to enjoy the amusement of heaping up absurdity upon absurdity out of the very exuberance of their humorous conceits. Some of their pieces furnish stores of antiquarian and literary material; for example, the *Beggars' Bush* contains abundant illustrations of the slang dialect; and the fantastic extravaganza, the *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, is a storehouse of ancient English ballad poetry. They occasionally attempt some good-humored banter of Shakespeare. In the play just mentioned, the droll, pathetic speech on the installation of Clause as King of the Gypsies is a parody of Cranmer's speech in the last scene of *Henry VIII*.

The pastoral drama of *The Faithful Shepherdess* was written by Fletcher alone. Its exquisitely delicate sentiments are too often soiled by passages of loose and vicious thinking. Still it has so many charms that it commands the admiration of all who know the finest writings of our literature. Ben Jonson's best poetry, *The Sad Shepherd*, and Milton's *Comus*, were inspired by this poem of Fletcher.

**Philip Massinger** (1584-1640) was a gentleman by birth. He spent two years in the University of Oxford. His works prove that he had an intimate knowledge of the classical writers of antiquity. In 1604 he began his theatrical life, and continuing it until his death, found it an uninterrupted succession of struggle, disappointment, and distress. Unlike Beaumont and Fletcher, who were servile in their deference to the Court, he was an outspoken critic of the government, and an advocate of republican principles. According to the practice of the time, he frequently wrote in partnership with other playwrights—the names of Dekker, Field, Rowley, Middleton, and others being often found in conjunction with his.

We have the titles of thirty-seven plays, either entirely or partly of his composition. But eighteen of them are extant.\* The best known are *The Virgin Martyr* (93), *The Fatal Dowry*, *The Duke of Milan*, *The Bondman*, *The City Madam*, and *The New Way to Pay Old Debts*. The last one named has occasional representation on the modern stage, and contains the famous character of Sir Giles Overreach.

The quality which distinguishes this noble writer is a singular power of delineating the sorrow of pure and lofty minds exposed to unmerited suffering, cast down but not humiliated by misfortune. Massinger had no aptitude for pleasantries; but a desire to please the mixed audiences of those days introduced such an amount of stupid buffoonery and loathsome indecency into his plays, that we are driven to the supposition of his having had recourse to other hands to supply this obnoxious matter. His style and versification are singularly sweet and noble. No writer of that day is so free from archaisms and obscurities; and perhaps there is none in whom more constantly appear all the force, harmony, and dignity of which the English language is susceptible. To characterize Massinger in one sentence, we may say that dignity, tenderness, and grace, are the qualities in which he excels. At the close of a life of poverty he died in obscurity, and in the notice of his death the parish register names him "Philip Massinger a stranger."

To John Ford (1586-1639) the passion of unhappy love has furnished almost exclusively the subject-matter of his plays. He was a lawyer, who found time to use a poetic pen while carrying on the work of his profession. He began his dramatic career by joining with Dekker in the production of the touching tragedy of the *Witch of Edmonton*, in which popular superstitions are skilfully combined with a pathetic story of love and treachery. The works attributed to him are not numerous. Besides the above piece he wrote the tragedies of the *Brother and Sister*, the *Broken Heart* (beyond all

\* "The English drama never suffered a greater loss (for all Shakespeare's pieces have descended to us) than in the havoc which time and negligence have committed among the works of Massinger; for of thirty-eight plays attributed to his pen, only eighteen have been preserved."—*Drake's Shakespeare and his Times*.

"Eleven of them in manuscript were in possession of a Mr. Warburton, whose cook, desirous of saving what she considered better paper, used them in the kindling of fires and the basting of turkeys, and would doubtless have treated the manuscript of the *Faery Queene* and the *Novum Organum* in the same way, had Providence seen fit to commit them to her master's custody."—*Whipple's Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*.

comparison his most powerful work), a graceful historical drama on the subject of *Perkin Warbeck*, and the following romantic or tragi-comic pieces: the *Lover's Melancholy* (91), *Love's Sacrifice*, *Fancies Chaste and Noble*, and the *Lady's Trial*. His personal character, if we may judge from slight allusions found in contemporary writings, was sombre and retiring; and in his works pensive tenderness and pathos are carried to a higher pitch than in any other dramatist. His lyre has few tones; but his music makes up in intensity for what it wants in variety. We can hardly understand how any audience could ever have borne the harrowing up of their sensibilities by such repeated strokes of pathos. His verse and dialogue are somewhat monotonous in their sweet and plaintive melody, and are marked by a great richness of classical allusion.

But perhaps the most powerful and original genius among the Shakespearcan dramatists of the second order is John Webster. He is as terrific as Ford is pathetic. His literary physiognomy has something of that dark, bitter, and woful expression which thrills us in the portraits of Dante. The number of his known works is very small; the most celebrated among them is the tragedy of the *Duchess of Malfy* (95); but others are not inferior to that strange piece in intensity of feeling and savage grimness of plot and treatment. Besides the above, we have *The Devil's Law-Case*, *Guise, or the Massacre of France*, in which the St. Bartholomew is, of course, the main action; the *White Devil*, founded on the crimes and sufferings of Vittoria Corombona; *Appius and Virginia*. We thus see that he worked by preference on themes which offered a congenial field for his portrayal of the darker passions and of the moral tortures of their victims. As Charles Lamb says, "To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit; this only a Webster can do." Like many of his contemporaries, he knew the secret of expressing the deepest emotion through the most familiar images; and the dirges and funeral songs which he has frequently introduced into his pieces, have that intenseness of feeling which seems to resolve itself into the element which it contemplates."

As we pass on to the lower grades of dramatic talent, we are

almost bewildered by the number and variety of manifestations. A few writers, however, deserve a distinct notice:—**Thomas Dekker** was one of the most prolific of these. Although he generally appears as a fellow-laborer with other dramatists, yet in the few pieces attributed to his unassisted pen, he shows great elegance of language and deep tenderness of sentiment. **Thomas Middleton**, best known as the author of *The Witch*, is admired for a certain wild and fantastic fancy which delights in portraying scenes of supernatural agency. **John Marston** is distinguished mainly by a lofty and satiric tone of invective, in which he lashes the vices and follies of mankind. **Thomas Heywood** exhibits a graceful fancy, and one of his plays, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, is among the most touching of the period.

The dramatic era of Elizabeth and James closes with **James Shirley** (1594–1666), whose comedies, though in many respects bearing the same general character as the works of his great predecessors, still seem the earnest of a new period (96). He excels in the delineation of gay and fashionable society; and his dramas are more laudable for ease, grace, and animation, than for profound analysis of human nature, or for vivid portraiture of character. But the glory of the English drama had almost departed; and its extinction by external violence in 1642 but precipitated what was inevitable. The breaking out of the Civil War in that year closed the theatres; and this suspension of the dramatic profession was made perpetual by an ordinance of the Commons in 1648. From that date until the Restoration, all theatrical performances were illegal; but with the connivance of Cromwell, Davenant gave dramatic entertainments at Rutland House; and upon the great Protector's death in 1658, he ventured to re-open a public theatre in Drury Lane. With this event began an entirely new chapter in the history of the English stage.

The Elizabethan drama is the most wonderful and majestic outburst of genius that any age has yet seen. It is characterized by marked peculiarities; an intense richness and fertility of imagination, combined with the greatest force and vigor of familiar expression; an intimate union of the common and the refined; the holdest flights of fancy and the most scrupulous fidelity to actual reality. The great object of these dramatists being to produce

intense impressions upon a miscellaneous audience, they sacrificed everything to strength and nature. Their writings reflect not only faithful images of human character and passion under every conceivable condition, not only the strongest as well as the most delicate coloring of fancy and imagination, but also the profoundest and simplest precepts derived from the practical experience of life.

For brief discussions of authors named in this chapter, see Hazlitt's Works, Vol. III., Coleridge's Works, Vol. IV., Lamb's Works, Vol. IV., Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Vol. III.

Oct. 5. - 83

Third Rhetorical Division

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PROSE LITERATURE OF THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD.

THE object of the present chapter is to trace the nature and the results of that revolution in philosophy brought about by the writings of Bacon ; and at the same time to give a general view of the prose literature of the Elizabethan era. As Bacon was the grandest thinker of that age who wrote in prose, he must be the principal figure of the chapter ; and other authors of inferior merit must be but briefly mentioned.

Much of the peculiarly practical tendency of the political and philosophical literature of our own time can be traced to its beginning in the Elizabethan era, when, as a result of the Reformation, education first found many devotees among English laymen, and prose literature, for the first time, was generally used for other than ecclesiastical purposes. The clergy had no longer the monopoly of that learning and of those acquirements which, during preceding centuries, had given them the monopoly of power. Laymen were wielding the pen. It must be admitted that the prose of that era makes but a poor figure when compared with the splendor of the Elizabethan poetry ; and that it is, indeed, redeemed from almost utter insignificance by the few English writings of Francis Bacon, a man who gained his chief glories from works that were written in the Latin language.

In the humble department of historical chronicles, **John Stow**, before the end of the sixteenth century, published his *Summary of English Chronicles, Annals* and *A Survey of London* ; and **Raphael Holinshed**, who died in 1580, had written the pages from which Shakespeare drew the material for some of his half-legendary, half-historical dramas, and for the majority of his purely historical plays.



One of the most extraordinary men of this era was Sir **Walter Raleigh** (1552–1618), whose romantic career belongs to the political rather than to the literary history of England (45, 56). He was among the foremost courtiers of the queen; \* he was a bold navigator, exploring unknown regions of the globe; he was a brave soldier, winning laurels on the Continent and in Ireland. When James I. came to the throne, Raleigh's fortunes declined. He was charged with treason, was tried, and sentenced to the Tower, where he was imprisoned for thirteen years. During the weary years of this long imprisonment he devoted himself to literary and scientific work;—some of the time experimenting in chemistry with the hope of discovering the philosopher's stone, and much of the time, with the help of friends, writing his *History of the World*. By that work he won his literary fame. Later histories have shown that what he supposed to be historical facts were merely fancies, and that many of his theories were groundless; still, he holds and deserves the honor of being the pioneer in the department of dignified historical writing. After his long imprisonment he was sent to South America in quest of riches for the king. The expedition was unfortunate. One of Raleigh's exploits enraged the Spanish court, and to appease the wrath of the Spaniards, Raleigh was seized upon his return to England, and was beheaded in 1618. A man of remarkable patience and resoluteness, and showing many signs of powerful intellect, Raleigh must have been one of the grandest of the literary men of his age, had his life been devoted to letters, instead of being spent in gaining brilliant temporary successes in a variety of pursuits. He was the founder of that famous "Mermaid Club" in which Jonson, Fletcher, probably Shakespeare, and other eminent wits of the day, gathered to enjoy each other's sparkling conversation, and was himself accounted one of the most charming men of that literary company. His resources of character must have been

\* "The legend of his first introduction to Elizabeth is too romantic to be omitted, although we must not forget that it rests only on tradition. When the Queen, in walking one day, came to a muddy place,—these places were very common in English roads and pathways then,—she stopped and hesitated. Raleigh, seeing her pause, with ready tact flung down his rich plush cloak for her to step on. The graceful act, which was just the kind of flattering attention that Elizabeth liked best, showed that Raleigh was cut out for a courtier. A capital investment it was that the young soldier made. He lost his cloak, but he gained the favor of a queen who well knew how to honor and reward."—*W. F. Collier*.

equal to his reputation, for in the most desperate circumstances he was thoroughly self-possessed. In his trial for treason, when the Attorney-General, hurling fierce invectives at him, said, "I want words to express thy viperous treasons," "True," said Raleigh, "for you have spoken the same thing half a dozen times over already;" and when he was brought to the block, taking the axe in his hand, he ran his fingers over its keen edge, smiling as he said, "This is a sharp medicine, but it will cure all diseases." It is to be regretted that he did not use his ever-present wit, his poetic talent and his ready pen, in making more varied and more valuable contributions to our literature.

The great champion of the principles of the Church of England against the encroachments of Puritan sentiments was **Richard Hooker** (1553-1600), a man of piety and of vast learning. He was for four years a fellow of the University of Oxford, where he gained fame as a lecturer on Oriental literature. In 1585 his eloquence and learning obtained for him the eminent post of Master of the Temple in London. Here his colleague, Walter Travers, propounded doctrines of church government similar to those of the Calvinistic confession, and therefore incompatible with Hooker's opinions. The mildness and modesty of Hooker's character made controversy odious to him. He induced his ecclesiastical superior to remove him to the more congenial duties of a country parish, and there he devoted the remainder of his life to that work which has placed him among the most eminent of Anglican divines, and among the best prose-writers of his age. The title of this work is *A Treatise on the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (57), and its purpose is to investigate and define the principles which underlie the right of the Church to claim obedience from its members, and the duty of the members to render obedience to the Church. But while thus fortifying the organization of the English Church against the attacks of the Roman Catholics on the one hand and of the Puritans on the other, Hooker has built up his arguments upon those eternal truths which are the foundation of all law, all duty, and all rights, political as well as religious. *The Ecclesiastical Polity* is a work of profound and cogent reasoning, supported by immense and varied erudition, and vitalized by a spirit of fervent devotion. It gave new dignity to English prose literature. Its style is wholly free from pedantry, clear and vigorous. To Hooker belongs the

glory of first fully developing the English language as a vehicle of refined and philosophic thought. The breadth and power of his mind are fitly expressed in the stately majesty of his periods.\*

*Read the Essay*

## FRANCIS BACON.

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."—*Pope*.

"The great secretary of nature and all learning."—*Walton*.

"He had the sound, distinct, comprehensive knowledge of Aristotle, with all the beautiful lights, graces, and embellishments of Cicero."—*Addison*.

"He may be compared with those liberators of nations who have given laws by which they might govern themselves, and retained no homage but their gratitude."—*Hallam*.

"Who is there that upon hearing the name of Lord Bacon does not instantly recognize everything of genius the most profound, everything of literature the most extensive, everything of discovery the most penetrating, everything of observation of human life the most distinguishing and refined?"—*Burke*.

"My conceit of his person was never increased towards him by his place or honors; but I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself: in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want."—*Ben Jonson*.

**B. 1561.]** In his mature manhood **Francis Bacon**  
**D. 1626.]** was extravagant, fond of display, a servile courtier, everywhere a close observer, a keen critic, and a profound thinker. His seemingly incongruous qualities, if native to his character, had been fostered by the fortune of his childhood and youth. He was the younger son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, and the favorite son. His father, the Lord-Keeper of the Great Seal of England, was one of the bright stars in that galaxy of statesmen who gave

\* One of the most famous sentences in our literature, found in the first book of *The Ecclesiastical Polity*, reads as follows: "Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

the reign of Elizabeth its glory. His mother was a woman of stern integrity of character, trained in the learning of that day. Under parental influences in which were blended dignity, vigor, intellect, refinement, and practical shrewdness, in the elegance of an English nobleman's palace, amid the clustering associations of cultivated society, there was every opportunity for the development of extravagant tastes, of courtiership, of stimulating self-esteem, of keen and varied observation, and of profound thoughtfulness. In boyhood his body was very delicate, his mind was precocious. The great Queen, petting him, would call him her little Lord Keeper. When thirteen years old he was sent to Cambridge, where he spent three years in forming a decided and lasting contempt for the unpractical studies of the university. That life at the university roused a spirit courageous enough to attack the monstrous system of scholastic learning, and honest enough to tell the world that what they had been reverencing as a divine philosophy was, as they were beginning to suspect, false and effete. His incisive thinking penetrated the shadow of that darksome learning, and saw the form of a philosophy which would become fruit-bearing; and as he watched it with intenser gaze as years passed by, he gained such clear views of its glory that he was enabled to give rich prophecies and descriptions of it in his volumes of wisdom. His observation discovered that in the system of instruction at the universities there was slavish deference to authority, that men did not dare to think beyond the thoughts of former generations, that progress was thereby forbidden. In his fellow-students he saw men like "becalmed ships, that never move but by the wind of other men's breath, and have no oars of their own to steer withal."

At sixteen he went to live in France as an *attaché* of the English ambassador. There he saw new phases of the courtier's life, studied a strange national character, and con-

firmed his opinions of the need of improvement in the intellectual pursuits of men. He must have displayed some talent in business affairs, for he gained the confidence of the ambassador, and was intrusted by him with despatches to the Queen. During the two years spent upon the Continent he was observing and studious, and was interested in gathering material for his first literary work, *Of the State of Europe*.

In 1579 he was summoned to England on account of the death of his father. He was then nearly nineteen years of age—without money, with only his ambition and his intellect to help him in winning his way to eminence. Living in that stirring age, schooled in the ways of the world, knowing the methodless life of the professed philosophers, a mind as observing, as positive as his, had necessarily resolved upon a definite pursuit, and had established for itself certain principles of action. If we can detect that purpose and those principles, we may be able to understand some of the mysterious ways of his life.

It is reasonable for us to believe that he had become convinced—

1st. That learning was not doing the sort of work it should do for mankind.

2d. That whoever would inaugurate a reformation in learning must be a person eminent in the public confidence.

3d. That no person could attain eminence and public confidence who had not the sanction and patronage of the Court.

4th. That scholarly attainments, without the courtier's shrewdness, could not win the needed sanction and patronage.

Passages in his letters and the course he pursued, show that these were his earnest convictions. He promptly began the study of the law, and in 1582 was called to the bar. Those who criticise him say that he made servile and

persistent appeals for patronage. He did beg of his uncle Burleigh, the Lord Treasurer, that some office, with light duties, and yet with generous compensation, might be given to him, in order that he might have the time and the means for becoming "a pioneer in the deep mines of truth." In one of his letters, he said that he had "vast contemplative ends," and that he had "taken all knowledge for his province." These earnest declarations doubtless seemed to the sturdy old uncle like the aspirations of a dreamer. He had no faith in the practical shrewdness of his nephew, and therefore pushed him away from the approaches to preferment. Failing in his repeated attempts to gain the favor of Burleigh, Bacon sought and won the friendship of Essex, his uncle's rival. Essex gave him large sums of money, and tried, unsuccessfully, to secure his political advancement. Bacon soon discovered that Essex was a dangerous friend, for he was a reckless man. Their intimacy ceased. In a few years Bacon, having been appointed Queen's counsel, was called upon to prosecute his old friend for acts of treason. The charges were proved, and the penalty of death was inflicted. For his part in the prosecution Bacon has been accused of ingratitude and of most malicious selfishness. It has been said that he might have saved his friend, or, at least, from very shame, might have refused to appear against him. But the truth seems to be that Bacon did all that he could do to prevent Essex from pursuing his mad follies; that in the trial he dealt as gently with him as he could; and that when, by the Queen's command, he prepared the government's defence for its treatment of Essex, his expressions were so moderate as to call forth from the angry Queen the rebuking words, "I see old love is not easily forgotten." The charge that Bacon desperately sought the life of Essex, for the sake of ingratiating himself with Elizabeth, is altogether improbable.

He was now on the way to high political honors. In

the House of Commons he was recognized as a masterly orator; \* in his profession he was renowned for brilliancy and learning. He was still seeking advancement, was using persistent and studied complaisance towards the Court. But surely he was not actuated merely by the infatuation of the politician. His early ambition for the reform of learning was still inspiring him. With all his eloquence he urged the government to aid the reforms which he had projected. The busy whirl of his public life did not keep him away from the study of practical philosophy. His lament is pitiful as again and again he tells of the limited time he has to give to his inquiries after the truths of nature. These phases of his life indicate, that the more reasonable as well as the more generous view of his servility to the Court shows him to have been seeking something beyond political success. That something was the eminence which should enable him to inaugurate in his own day the methods by which he could secure the advancement of learning.

The story is told that when Bacon was a little boy the Queen asked him his age. He replied, "I am two years younger than your Majesty's happy reign." That was an answer for a native courtier, a devotee of royalty, to make. When he was sixty years old, and was selected as the scape-goat to bear away the abuses of James's administration, he bowed his head, submissively acknowledged his faults, and received the punishment which a cowardly king permitted to be inflicted upon him. That was an act for a devotee of royalty to perform. From childhood, when he gave his

\* "There happened in my time one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language, when he could spare or pass a jest, was nobly censorious. No man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."—*Ben Jonson, referring to Bacon.*

*Orating - June 18 1912, 1A.*

honest compliment to the Queen, until old age, when he surrendered his office and some of his honor for the comfort of the King, he showed to the English crown a loyalty, a reverence, which seems to us like superstition. For this he has been condemned by many an historian, and has been lashed by the scourge of many a critic. When he is named as the apostle of progress his revilers reply that he was the blind advocate of kingcraft. That there is ground for such statement cannot be denied. It covers nearly all the charges that are made against his character; still it does not make him a hypocrite, the morally worthless man he is sometimes described as being. His subservience to a crown was inbred. Nicholas Bacon, the Keeper of the Great Seal, had taught his son to cherish a religious reverence for the person who might be sitting on the throne of England.

Justice to the memory of a man who is everywhere recognized as one of the greatest men in history, demands that he be judged, not as Bacon too often is, from one or two incidents of suspected infidelity to his manhood; but from the whole course of his life, its early training, its definite purpose, and its ruling principles.

On the coronation of James I., in 1603, Bacon was knighted, and at the same time was married to Alice Barnham, the daughter of a London alderman. He was thereafter elected to more than one Parliament, and was appointed Solicitor-General, then Attorney-General, then Lord Keeper, with the title of Baron Verulam, and his titles were finally completed by those of Lord-Chancellor and Viscount St. Albans. In the discharge of his varied and great responsibilities the versatility and energy of his genius were well displayed. His political disgrace, to which allusion was made in the preceding paragraph, occurred in 1621. He was condemned to lose the chancellorship, to pay a fine of forty thousand pounds, to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure, to be ineligible to any office in the



state, and was forbidden to sit in Parliament, or to come within twelve miles of the court. But a remission of these penalties was soon granted, and an annual pension of twelve hundred pounds was bestowed upon him for life.

The life of the fallen minister was prolonged for five years after his disgrace. In spite of his misfortunes and of his pecuniary embarrassments, those were his most fruitful years. He died in 1626. Riding in his carriage one spring day, when the snow was falling, it occurred to him that snow might serve as well as salt in preserving flesh. So stopping at a cabin by the roadside, he bought a fowl, for the purpose of trying the experiment. By the slight exposure he was chilled, and thrown into a sudden and fatal fever. To use the words of Lord Macaulay, "The great apostle of experimental philosophy was destined to be its martyr."

In order to appreciate the services which Bacon rendered to science, we must dismiss from our minds the common and erroneous idea that he was an inventor or a discoverer in any specific branch of knowledge. His mission was, not to teach the results of investigation, but to show the method by which investigations should be made. We must also remind ourselves of that philosophy which Bacon wished to supplant. It was a compound of the freaks of speculation. It had nothing in common with the practical science of modern times. It was the old Aristotelian philosophy robbed of its slight veneration for nature and perverted by many unwarranted interpretations. We call it scholasticism. No one of its devotees was bold enough to step from the platform of authority. Aristotle, misrepresented, was respected as the dictator of all correct thinking. Verbal distinctions, not useful investigations, consumed the talents of the thoughtful; quibbles took the place of earnest questionings. Failure to advance was due to no want of retirement and meditation,

to no distaste for argument and wrangling. The intellect was in thralldom; and reason was the vassal of a worthless faith. This scholastic period is generally spoken of as extending from the ninth to the close of the fifteenth century. It was the age of false premises and of futile reasoning. Speculation was carried in every direction. Natural science, as well as psychology, was made the subject of vain imaginings. Like a huge breakwater this scholasticism skirted the sea of thought. For three centuries it had broken the wave of every advancing opinion. But as the fifteenth century drew to its close the sea gave indications of an approaching storm, the sky was overcast by portentous clouds, wave after wave came rolling shoreward from the ocean of free thought, and, at last, the surge of the Reformation burst with terrifying roar against that time-worn scholasticism, tumbling it out of the way. Then thought advanced; and the colossal Bacon came upon the scene to give direction to that thought.

The Aristotelian method of investigation, even before its perversion by the schoolmen, had been open to the charge of infertility—of being essentially unprogressive. Its aim was the attainment of abstract truth; practical utility was regarded as an end which, whether attained or not, was beneath the dignity of the sage. The object of the Inductive Method, as proclaimed by Bacon, was *fruit*,—the improvement of the condition of mankind. He wished man to become “the minister and interpreter of nature.” He would have the laws of nature understood, in order that they might be observed intelligently by the sailor, the farmer, the miner, by whomsoever might be a worker in the world. From the knowledge of the laws of nature, industries would be more effective, comforts would be multiplied, the condition of man would be ameliorated. Those laws he would have discovered by means of a methodic, scientific observation of the phenomena of nature. He devised the plan by which

such observations were to be made. He did not originate induction—induction is a natural process of the human mind. He showed how induction should be carried into different lines of inquiry in order to produce results for the good of mankind. He wished the world to know more, he saw that knowledge would be increased by the use of the inductive method, and he suggested the plan by which nature could be compelled to yield her secrets. His system is contained in the series of works to which he intended to give the general title of *Instauratio Magna*, or The Great Institution of True Philosophy. Its scope is magnificent, and that is what displays the genius of the author. The work proposed could not be done by one man, nor by one age; for every new addition to the stock of human knowledge, as Bacon plainly saw, would modify the conclusions, though confirming the soundness of his method.

The *Instauratio* was to consist of six parts, of which the following is a short synopsis:

I. *Partitiones Scientiarum*. This work includes his earlier treatise on *The Advancement of Learning*, and gives a general summary and classification of human knowledge, with indications of those branches in which science was specially defective.

II. *Novum Organum*. This “new instrument” he describes as “the science of a better and more perfect use of reason in the investigation of things, and of the true aids of the understanding.” It sets forth the methods to be adopted in searching after truth, points out the principal sources of error in former times, and suggests the means of avoiding errors in the future. Of the nine sections into which this part of the work was divided, only the first was fully discussed.

III. *Historia Naturalis*. This part was designed to be a collection of well-observed facts and experiments in what we call Natural Philosophy and Natural History, and was to

furnish the raw material to be used in the new method. Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* is a specimen of the work he would have done in this division of his *Instauratio*. His *History of the Winds*, of *Life and Death*, are also contributions to this division.

IV. *Scala Intellectus*, the ladder of the mind. This fourth part was to give rules for the gradual ascent of the mind from particular instances or phenomena to principles more and more abstract.

V. *Prodtomi*. Prophecies, or anticipations of truths "hereafter to be verified," were to have furnished the material for this part.

VI. *Philosophia Secunda*. This was intended to be the record of practical results springing from the application of the new method.

But a small portion of the magnificent plan was executed. The founder himself presented no claims to the rank of a discoverer. His genius as a philosopher is displayed only in the comprehensiveness of his scheme, in the masterly way in which he lays out work for his own day and for later generations. His greatness as a man appears in the incisiveness and discrimination of his thinking, in his brave declaration of the cause of fruitlessness in former philosophy, and in the sublime conviction which prompted him to urge the improved method of investigation, and to foretell what the future would bring. His keen thinking made him the eminent critic of errors that had been; his imagination made him the glowing prophet of the glory that was to be.

His admirers overstate his work in the study of nature. They find him the first to expose the childish wisdom of his predecessors, the first to announce the new era, the first to expound the method by which the changes were to be brought about. The succeeding progress was in accordance with his prophecy; the method was his, and therefore the

modern reader is misled into calling Bacon the Father of Modern Philosophy. As Craik says, "The mistake is the same as if it were to be said that Aristotle was the father of poetry." Aristotle first enunciated the laws by which poetry is written; Bacon enunciated the laws by which discoveries in nature are made.

Twenty centuries had elapsed after Aristotle had shown his method of searching after truth before Bacon undertook to introduce a new method. Aristotle made thought active; Bacon aimed to make it useful. Aristotle made logic the fundamental science, and considered metaphysics of greater importance than physics. His theory, carried into practice, produced twenty centuries of fruitlessness; two centuries and a half of Bacon's theory in practice, have revolutionized the literary, the commercial, the political, the religious, the scientific world. The ancients had a philosophy of words; Bacon called for a philosophy of works. His glory is founded upon a union of speculative power with practical utility, which were never so combined before. He neglected nothing as too small, despised nothing as too low, by which our happiness could be augmented; in him, above all, were combined boldness and prudence, the intensest enthusiasm, and the plainest common sense.

It is probable that Bacon generally wrote the first sketch of his works in English, but afterwards caused them to be translated into Latin, which was in his time the language of science, and even of diplomacy. He is reported to have employed the services of many young men of learning as secretaries and translators; among these the most remarkable is Hobbes, afterwards so celebrated as the author of the *Leviathan*. The style, in which the Latin books of the *Instauratio* were given to the world, though certainly not a model of classical purity, is weighty, vigorous, and picturesque.

Bacon's writings in English are numerous. The most

important among them is the volume of *Essays, or Counsels Civil and Moral* (58-61), of which the first edition, containing ten essays, was published in 1597. The number gradually increased to fifty-eight, many of the later ones giving expression to the author's profoundest thought and richest fancy. These short papers discuss various subjects, from grave questions of morals down to the most trifling accomplishments. As specimens of intellectual activity, of original thinking and aptness of illustration, they surpass any other writing of equal extent in our literature.\* They illustrate the author's comprehensiveness of mind, and his wonderful power of condensing thought. In his style there is the same quality which is applauded in Shakespeare—a combination of the intellectual and imaginative, the closest reasoning in the boldest metaphor. It is this that renders both the dramatist and the philosopher at once the richest and the most concise of writers. Many of Bacon's essays—as the inimitable one on studies—are absolutely oppressive from the power of thought compressed into the smallest possible compass. It is through his *Essays* that Bacon is most widely known (58-61). “Coming home,” as he says himself, “to men's business and bosoms,” they gained, even in his own time, an extensive popularity, which they still retain.

In his *Wisdom of the Ancients* he endeavored to explain the political and moral truths concealed in the mythology of classical ages, and exhibited an ingenuity which Macaulay calls morbid. His unfinished romance, *The New Atlantis*, was intended to set forth the fulfilment of his dreams of a philosophical millennium. He also wrote a *History of Henry VII.*, and a vast number of state-papers, judicial

\* “Few books are more quoted. \* \* \* It would be somewhat derogatory to a man of the slightest claim to polite letters were he unacquainted with the *Essays* of Bacon.”—*Hallam*.

THE ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE,  
As discussed in the five preceding chapters.

POETS.

NON-DRAMATIC.

Thomas Sackville,  
Sir Philip Sidney,  
Edmund Spenser,  
Walter Raleigh.

[The Dawn of the Drama.]

DRAMATIC.

John Lyly,  
George Peele,  
Thomas Kyd,  
Robert Greene,  
Christopher Marlowe,  
William Shakespeare,  
Ben Jonson,  
Beaumont and Fletcher  
Philip Massinger,  
John Ford,  
John Webster.

PROSE WRITERS.

Walter Raleigh, *the Historian*.  
Richard Hooker, *the Churchman*.  
Francis Bacon, *the Philosopher*.





decisions, and other professional writings. All these are marked by a vigorous and ornamented style, and are among the finest specimens of the prose literature of that age.

For more extended reading on this topic consult Macaulay's essay on Bacon, Whipple's essays in *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, Lewes's *Biographical History of Philosophy*, Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, *The Baconian Philosophy*, by Tyler, Fischer's *Bacon and His Times*.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SO-CALLED METAPHYSICAL POETS.

**A**LTHOUGH the literature of the seventeenth century indicates no marvellous outburst of creative power, it has yet left deep and enduring traces upon the English thought and upon the English language. The influences of the time produced a style of writing in which intellect and fancy played a greater part than imagination or passion. Samuel Johnson styled the poets of that century the metaphysical school; that tendency to intellectual subtilty which appears in the prose and verse of the Elizabethan writers, and occasionally extends its contagion to Shakespeare himself, became with them a controlling principle. As a natural consequence, they allowed ingenuity to gain undue predominance over feeling; and in their search for odd, recondite, and striking illustrations they were guilty of frequent and flagrant violations of reason. Towards the close of the period Milton is a grand and solitary representative of poets of the first order. He owed little to his contemporaries. They were chiefly instrumental in generating the pseudo-correct and artificial manner which characterizes the classical writers of the early part of the eighteenth century.

**John Donne** (1573-1631) has been mentioned already among our first satirists. He was a representative of the highest type of the extravagances of his age (50). His ideal of poetical composition was fulfilled by clothing every thought in a series of analogies, always remote, often repulsive and inappropriate. His versification is singularly harsh and tuneless, and the crudeness of his expression is in unpleasant contrast with the ingenuity of his thinking. In his own day his reputation was very high. "Rare Ben" pronounced him "the first poet in the world in some things," but declared that "for not being understood he would perish." This prophecy was confirmed by public opinion in the eighteenth

century, but has been somewhat modified by the criticism of our day, which discovers much genuine poetical sentiment beneath the faults of taste. His writings certainly give evidence of rich, profound, and varied learning.

Donne's early manhood was passed in company with the famous wits of the Mermaid Tavern. The chief productions of his youthful muse were his *Satires*, the *Metempsychosis*, and a series of amatory poems. When forty-two years of age, he was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. He soon became a famous preacher, and was appointed Dean of St. Paul's.

Favoring circumstances rather than substantial desert give **Edmund Waller** (1605-1687) his prominent position in the literary and political history of his time. From his youth his associations were with that polished society which could at once appreciate and develop his varied talents. Versatility, brilliant wit, graceful and fascinating manners, and an underlying fund of time-serving shrewdness gained him political distinction, and made him a social idol. But his character was timid and selfish; and his principles were modified by every change that affected his own interests. Unfortunately for him he was a relative of Cromwell and a member of the Long Parliament. Although constrained by policy to avow the republican principles of the Puritans, he was at heart a royalist, and lost no opportunity of secretly abetting the Stuart cause. His consummate adroitness long averted the consequences of this double-dealing; but in 1643 he was convicted of a plot for restoring the authority of Charles I. Severe penalties were inflicted upon him, and he bowed to them in abject submission. The Restoration renewed his prosperity, and he promptly panegyricized Charles II. with the same fervor which had marked his encomiums of the Protector. He died shortly after the accession of James II., having, with characteristic sagacity, foretold the ruinous issues of that monarch's policy.

Most of Waller's poems are the verses of love (107), addressed to Lady Dorothy Sidney, whom he long wooed under the name of Sacharissa. Playfulness of fancy, uniform elegance of expression and melody, which are the chief merits of his verses, can scarcely atone for their lack of enthusiasm. Two eulogies of Cromwell, one composed during the Commonwealth, the other after the Protector's death, contain passages of dignity and power. He was less felici-

tous in a poem on Divine love, and in his longer work, *The Battle of the Summer Islands*, which describes in a half-serious, half-comic strain an attack upon two stranded whales in the Bermudas.

In his own day and by the succeeding generation, Waller was thought to have perfected the art of expressing graceful and sensible ideas in clear and harmonious language. Both Dryden and Pope have acknowledged their obligations to his influence as the "Maker and model of melodious verse." But his fame rested on the mechanical perfections of his style and on the good taste which avoided striking faults, rather than on the power of imagination which is the main source of positive beauty and enduring interest in poetry. At the present day his works are little read.

**Abraham Cowley** (1618-1667) was the most popular English poet of his time. He affords a remarkable instance of intellectual precocity; when a mere child he had a passionate admiration for the *Faery Queene*, and his first poems were published when he was only fifteen years of age. After a residence of seven years at Cambridge, whence he was ejected on account of his being a royalist, he studied at Oxford until that town was occupied by the Parliamentary forces. He then joined Queen Henrietta, the wife of Charles I., who was residing in France; and he remained upon the

Continent for nearly twelve years, exerting all his energies **1660]** in behalf of the house of Stuart. When the Restoration was accomplished and his fidelity and self-sacrifice were forgotten by worthless Charles II., Cowley resolved "to retire to some of the American plantations and forsake the world forever;" but he abandoned this purpose and settled in rural life at Chertsey on the Thames. He received a lease of lands belonging to the Crown, and from it he derived a moderate revenue, which secured him against actual want.

Cowley was highly esteemed as a scholar, a poet and an essayist. Extensive and well-digested reading, sound sense and genial feeling, joined to a pure and natural expression, render his prose works very entertaining. As a poet he exhibits the bad qualities of the metaphysical school in their most attractive form. He has not poetic passion; he seems to be ever on the alert for striking analogies, and when he finds one he shows the electric spark of wit, rather than the fervent glow of genius. This fantastic play of the intellect displaces the natural outpouring of feeling

even in the collection of his amatory verses called *The Mistress*. The *Anacreontics* exhibit his poetical powers to better advantage; their tone is joyous and spirited, and they abound in images of natural and poetic beauty. He planned and began a work of great pretensions, entitled the  *Davideis*. It was intended to celebrate the sufferings and glories of the King of Israel; but it was left unfinished and is now utterly neglected. His talents were lyric, rather than epic, and he was therefore not qualified to develop so grand a theme in a masterly way.

Cowley deeply sympathized with the mighty revolution in philosophy which was inaugurated by Bacon; and perhaps the finest of his poems are those which with grave and well-adorned eloquence proclaim the nature and predict the triumph of the reforms in physical science.\*

Donne, the founder of "the Metaphysical School," and his two disciples who have been named, Waller and Cowley, were the most prominent literary figures and the most influential and popular writers in the generation immediately after the Elizabethan period. Davenant and Denham held secondary, but important positions.

**Sir William Davenant** (1605-1668) derives his chief claim upon posterity from his connection with the revival of the drama at the termination of the Puritan rule. He succeeded Ben Jonson in the office of Poet Laureate, and during the reign of Charles I. was manager of the Court Theatre. An energetic and useful partisan of the Cavaliers, his share in the intrigues of the Civil War had nearly brought him to the scaffold; but his life was saved by the intercession of some influential Puritan whom tradition asserts to have been John Milton. After the Restoration, Davenant flourished under royal favor, continuing to write dramas and to superintend their performance, until his death. The French drama, in its most artificial and frivolous type, was the ideal of Charles II. and of his court. French influence revolutionized the English stage. Actresses, young, beautiful, and skilful, took the places filled by the boys of the Elizabethan era.† In every respect the mechanical adjuncts of the drama were improved. It is easy to see in Davenant's own plays and in those which he remodeled, how completely

\* "Botany, in the mind of Cowley, turned into poetry."—*Samuel Johnson*.

† The first English actress appeared on the stage in the play of *Othello*, in the reign of Charles II., 1661.

the taste for splendour of scenery, music, dancing and costumery, had displaced the passion of the earlier public for faithful and intense picturing of life and nature. He was an ardent worshiper of the genius of Shakespeare and of Shakespeare's great contemporaries; yet conformity to the degraded standard of the age obliged him, in attempting to revive their works, to transform their spirit so entirely that every intelligent reader must regard the change with disgust. Davenant's most popular dramas were, *The Siege of Rhodes*, *The Law Against Lovers*, *The Cruel Brother* and *Albion*. His partisan writings were numerous and spirited. He received rapturous praise and fierce criticism from his contemporaries for an unfinished epic called *Gondibert* (108), in which a long series of lofty and chivalrous adventures are told in dignified but somewhat monotonous style.

Sir John Denham (1615-1668) was indifferent to learning in his youth, and throughout his life was addicted to the vice of gambling. No one had expected aught from him that would be worthy of a place in literature; but at twenty-six years of age he published a tragedy which won the applause of the critic and of the public. Two years later, his poem called *Cooper's Hill* appeared (109). That poem established his fame. It contains passages of fine description, and suggests many beautiful thoughts concerning the landscape near Windsor. Denham's language is pure and perspicuous, and is free from the fantastic metaphors abounding in the writings of his contemporaries. Dryden is thought to have been influenced by the regularity and vigor of Denham's verse.

In this age of artificial poets there were many who were interested in the religious agitations of the Puritan and the Cavalier. We can mention but four of them. George Wither was in thorough sympathy with the political and religious sentiments of Oliver Cromwell. He was a prolific writer in both prose and verse. The modern critics have given him more praise than former generations have considered his due. His prose attracts little attention. His pastoral poetry abounds in melody and in beauty of sentiment. His *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, and his *Hallelujah*, display his religious thought in worthy form. The whimsical conceits of the poetry of his day are occasionally found in his pages, but his style is generally simple, and expressive of natural and earnest feeling.

*Abuses Stript and Whipt* was the title of his most famous satire, written in 1614. For that satire he was imprisoned.

Francis Quarles (1592-1644), was an ardent royalist. He exhibits many points of intellectual likeness to Wither, to whom, however, he is inferior in poetical sentiment. His most popular work was a collection of *Divine Emblems*, in which moral and religious precepts are inculcated in short poems of almost laughable quaintness, and illustrated by equally grotesque engravings.

George Herbert (1593-1633) and Richard Crashaw (died 1650) exemplify the exaltation of religious sentiment; and both are worthy of admiration, not only as Christian poets, but as good and pious priests. Herbert was of noble birth. He first distinguished himself by the graces and accomplishments of the courtly scholar; but afterwards entering the Church as rector of a country parish, he exhibited all the virtues which can adorn the calling which he has beautifully described in a prose treatise under the title of *The Country Parson*. His poems are principally short religious lyrics, combining pious aspiration with frequent and beautiful pictures of nature (99). He decorates the altar with the sweetest and most fragrant flowers of fancy and of wit. Although not entirely devoid of that perverted ingenuity which deformed Quarles and Wither, his most successful efforts almost attain the perfection of devotional poetry,—a calm yet ardent glow, a well-governed fervor which seems peculiarly to belong to the Church of which he was a minister. His collection of sacred lyrics is entitled, *The Temple; or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*.

Crashaw was reared in the Anglican Church; but during the Puritan troubles he embraced the Romish faith and became canon of the Cathedral at Loretto. That he possessed an exquisite fancy, great talent for producing melody of verse, and that magnetic power over the reader which springs from deep earnestness, no one can deny (100). The most favorable specimens of his poetry are the *Steps to the Temple*, and the beautiful description entitled *Music's Duel*.

In the social life of the first half of this seventeenth century the gallant and frivolous Cavalier stands in contrast with the stern, serious Puritan. In its literature, romantic love and airy elegance appear beside the reverent sentiments of religious poetry. The

best representatives of the gayer poets are **Robert Herrick** (1591-1674) (101), **Sir John Suckling** (1609-1641) (102), **Sir Richard Lovelace** (1618-1658) (103), and **Thomas Carew** 1589-1639) (104). Herrick, after beginning his life in the brilliant and somewhat debauched literary society of the town and the theatre, took orders; but he continued to exhibit in his writings the voluptuous spirit of his youth. His poems were published under the names of *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers*. They are all lyric, and the former are principally songs concerning love and wine; the latter are upon sacred subjects. In him we find the strangest mixture of sensual coarseness with exquisite refinement; yet in fancy, in spirit, in musical rhythm, he is never deficient.

Suckling and Lovelace are representative Cavalier poets; both suffered in the royal cause; both exemplify the spirit of loyalty to the king, and of gallantry to the ladies. Suckling's best production is the exquisite *Ballad Upon a Wedding*, in which, assuming the character of a rustic, he describes a fashionable marriage. Lovelace is more serious and earnest than Suckling; his lyrics breathe devoted loyalty rather than the passionate, half-jesting love-fancies of his rival. Such are the beautiful lines to *Althea*, composed while the author was in prison.

Carew's lyrics reflect the same spirit as Suckling's. His *Inquiry*, his *Primrose*, and his "He that Loves a Rosy Cheek" have all the grace, vivacity and elegance which should characterize such works.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THEOLOGICAL WRITERS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE COMMONWEALTH.

THE Civil War of the seventeenth century was a religious as well as a political contest; and the prose literature of that time, therefore, exhibits a strong religious character. The Church of England exhibited her most glorious outburst of theological eloquence in the writings of Jeremy Taylor, Barrow, and the other great Anglican Fathers; and in the ranks of the dissenters many remarkable men appeared, hardly inferior to the churchmen in learning and genius, and fully equal in sincerity and enthusiasm.

**William Chillingworth** (1602–1644), an eminent defender of Protestantism against the Church of Rome, was converted to the Roman Catholic religion while studying at Oxford, and went to the Jesuits' College at Douay. He subsequently returned to Oxford, renounced his new faith, and published his celebrated work against Catholicism, entitled *The Religion of the Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (113). This has been esteemed a model of perspicuous logic. "His chief excellence," says Mr. Hallam, "is the close reasoning which avoids every dangerous admission, and yields to no ambiguousness of language. In later times his book obtained a high reputation; he was called the immortal Chillingworth; he was the favorite of all the moderate and the latitudinarian writers, of Tillotson, Locke, and Warburton."

The writings of **Sir Thomas Browne** (1605–1682), though miscellaneous rather than theological, belong, chronologically as well as by their style, to this department (114). He was an exceedingly learned man, and passed the greater part of his life in practising physic in the ancient city of Norwich. Among the most popular of his works are the treatise on *Hydrio taphia, or Urn-*

*Burial*, and essays on *Vulgar Errors*, or *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. But the book which affords the most satisfactory insight into his character is the *Religio Medici*, a species of confession of faith which gives a minute account of his own religious and philosophical opinions. These writings are the frank outpourings of one of the most eccentric and original minds that ever existed. They show varied and recondite reading; and their facts and suggestions are blended and vitalized by a strong and fervent imagination. At every step some extraordinary theory is illustrated by unexpected analogies, and the style is bristling with quaint Latinisms, which in another writer would be pedantic, but in Browne seem the natural garb of thought. All this makes him one of the most fascinating of authors; and he frequently rises to a sombre and touching eloquence.

Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) has in some respects an intellectual resemblance to Browne. Educated at Cambridge, he entered the Church, and soon rendered himself conspicuous in the pulpit. At the outbreak of the Civil War he incurred the displeasure of both factions by his studied moderation; but was for a time attached as chaplain to the Royalist army. During his campaigning Fuller industriously collected the materials for his most popular work, the *Worthies of England and Wales*. This, more than his *Church History*, has made his name known to posterity. His *Sermons* exhibit peculiarities of style which render him one of the most remarkable writers of his age (115). His writings are ever amusing, not only from the multitude of curious details, but also from the quaint yet frequently profound reflections suggested by these details. The *Worthies* contains biographical notices of eminent Englishmen, with descriptions of the botany, scenery, antiquities, and other matters of interest connected with their shires. It is an invaluable treasury of racy and interesting anecdotes. Of whatever subject Fuller treats, he places it in so many novel and piquant lights that the attention of the reader is constantly stimulated. One source of his picturesqueness is his frequent use of antithesis; not a bare opposition of words, but the juxtaposition of apparently discordant ideas, from whose sudden contact there flashes forth the spark of wit. But the spark is always warmed by a glow of sympathy and tenderness; for there is no gloom in Fuller's thought. The genial flash of his fancy brightens the gravest topics.

The greatest theological writer of the English Church at this period was **Jeremy Taylor** (1613-1667). He was a thoroughly educated man, and from his early years was conspicuous on account of his talents and his learning. He entered the service of the Church, and is said, by his youthful eloquence, to have attracted the notice of Archbishop Laud, who made him one of his chaplains, and procured him a fellowship in All Souls' College, Oxford. During the Civil War he stood high in the favor of the Cavaliers and the Court. After the downfall of the king, Taylor taught a school, for a time, in Wales, and continued to take an active part in religious controversies. His opinions were of course obnoxious to the dominant party, and on several occasions subjected him to imprisonment. At the Restoration he was made a bishop, and during the short time that he held the office he exhibited the brightest qualities that can adorn the episcopal dignity.

Taylor's writings deal with sacred thoughts. In order to be reverent towards his subject, he did not find it necessary to curb his fancy, or to quench his rhetorical fervor. His style is uniformly magnificent and impressive, and his periods roll on with a soft yet mighty swell, often having somewhat of the charm of verse. Jeffrey called him "the most Shakespearian of our great divines;" but it would be more appropriate to compare him to Spenser. He has the same pictorial fancy, the same harmony of arrangement as Spenser, and lacks the energy and the profound philosophy of the great dramatist, though like him, he draws his illustrations from the most familiar objects, and knows how to paint the terrible and the sublime as well as the tender and affecting. Together with Spenser's sweetness he has somewhat of the languor of Spenser's style. His intense study of ancient authors seems to have infected him with their Oriental and imaginative mode of thought. In his scholarly writing there may be an occasional indication of pedantry; in his religious life there is no cant, no hypocrisy. He was nearer abreast the truth than any former religious man of letters had been. In argument, in exhortation, he writes with the freedom and exuberance of his honest, happy soul. This man, with the genial style springing from his happy nature, is a most interesting character among polemical writers. His geniality did not prevent his being firm in his convictions. Living in an age when convictions had to be maintained against assaults, even Jeremy Taylor was


compelled to enter the arena with other thinkers. His polemical writings are unique. They are free from personal abuse; they are as broad in spirit as they are lofty in style. They are thoroughly benevolent. His style is unfit for the close reasoning of the polemic. His wanton fancy will beguile him from the direct line of an argument.

The best known of Taylor's controversial writings is the treatise *On the Liberty of Prophecy*. That work gives him the glory of being the one who put forth the "first famous plea for tolerance in religion, on a comprehensive basis and on deep-seated foundations." \* Although intended by Taylor to secure indulgence for the persecuted Episcopal preachers, it is, of course, equally applicable to the teachers of all forms of religion. An *Apology for Fixed and Set Forms of Worship* was an elaborate defence of the noble ritual of the Anglican Church. Among his works of a disciplinary and practical tendency may be mentioned *The Life of Christ, or the Great Exemplar*, in which the scattered details of the Evangelists and the Fathers are co-ordinated in a continuous narrative. Still more popular than these are the two admirable treatises, *On the Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*, and *On the Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying*, which mutually correspond to and complete each other. The least admirable of Taylor's productions is the *Ductor Dubitantium*, a treatise on questions of casuistry. His *Sermons* are very numerous, and are among the most eloquent, learned, and powerful in the whole range of Christian literature. As in his character, so in his writings, Taylor is the ideal of an Anglican pastor; in both he exemplifies the union of intellectual vigor and originality with practical simplicity and fervor.

Many men eminent for learning, piety, and zeal, appeared in the ranks of the Nonconformists at this time; but if we omit the grandest,—Milton and Bunyan,—who are reserved for subsequent chapters, the only writer claiming a distinct notice is **Richard Baxter** (1615–1691). He was the consistent and unconquerable defender of the right of religious liberty; and in the evil days of James II. was exposed to the virulence and brutality of the infamous Jeffreys. With the exception of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* and *A Call to the Unconverted*, his works are little known at the

present day. Amid danger and persecution, and in spite of the feebleness of his body, he toiled with his busy pen until he had contributed to the polemical and religious literature of his language the astounding number of one hundred and sixty-eight volumes.\*

\* "I wrote them in the crowd of all my other employments, which would allow me no great leisure for polishing or exactness, or any ornament; so that I scarce ever wrote one sheet twice over, nor stayed to make any blots or interlinings, but was fain to let it go as it was first conceived; and when my own desire was rather to stay upon one thing long than run over many, some sudden occasion or other extorted almost all my writings from me."—*Baxter's Narrative of His Own Life and Times.*



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## CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN MILTON.

"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart ;  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea—  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free ;  
So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness : and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."—*Wordsworth.*

"John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty."—*Macaulay.*

"The old blind poet hath published a tedious poem on the Fall of Man. If its length be not considered as a merit, it hath no other."—*Waller.*

"The first place among our English poets is due to Milton."—*Addison.*

"There is no force in his reasonings, no eloquence in his style, and no taste in his compositions."—*Goldsmith.*

"It is certain that this author, when in a happy mood and employed on a noble subject, is the most wonderfully sublime of all poets in the language."—*Hume.*

Homer  
Virgil  
Milton  
"Three poets in three distant ages born,  
Greece, Italy and England did adorn :  
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed ;  
The next in majesty ; In both the last.  
The force of nature could no further go ;  
To make a third she joined the other two."—*Dryden.*

"Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the *Paradise Lost* ? It is like that of a fine organ ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute ; variety without end, and never equalled, unless, perhaps, by *Virgil*."—*Cowper.*

"After I have been reading the *Paradise Lost* I can take up no other poet with satisfaction. I seem to have left the music of *Handel* for the music of the street."—*Lardner.*

"Milton is as great a writer in prose as in verse. Prose conferred on him during his life, poetry after his death; but the renown of the prose was lost in the glory of the poet."—*Chateaubriand*.

**H**ISTORY furnishes no example of entire consecration to intellectual effort more illustrious than the life of **John Milton**. From childhood he seems to have **B. 1608.]** been conscious of superior powers; and through-  
**D. 1674.]** out his career circumstances combined to develop his peculiar genius. He was born December 9th, 1608, and was the son of a London scrivener, whose industry and ability had gained a considerable fortune. Contemporaneous accounts prove the elder Milton to have been a man of forcible character, and—though a Puritan—a lover of art and literature. He was thus able and willing to foster the early indications of genius in his son, and gave to him the rare advantage of special preparation for a literary career.\* A thorough training under his private tutor, Thomas Young, was supplemented by a few years at St. Paul's School in London. At the age of seventeen he was admitted to Christ's College, at Cambridge. His poetical tastes manifested themselves in an overweening fondness for the classics, and for poetical literature, and in an equally intense dislike to the dry, scholastic sciences then in vogue at the university. His intellectual independence is said to have involved him in difficulty with the authorities of his college; but the disgrace must have been temporary, for he received both degrees at the usual intervals. To this period of his life many of his Latin poems are attributed; and the sublime *Hymn on the Nativity* was produced as a college exercise. After leaving the university he took up his residence in his father's country-seat at Horton, in Bucking-

\* "My father destined me, while yet a child, to the study of polite literature, which I embraced with such avidity, that from the twelfth year of my age I hardly ever retired to my rest from my studies till midnight,—which was the first source of injury to my eyes, to the natural weakness of which were added frequent headaches."

hamshire. There he passed five years in ceaseless devotion to study, disciplining his mind with mathematics and the sciences, and storing his memory with the riches of classical literature. There also he indulged his passionate fondness for music—a fondness to which the invariably melodious structure of his verse and the majestic harmony of his prose style, bear constant testimony. The chief productions of this studious retirement were *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, the *Arcades*, and *Lycidas*.

In 1638 he determined to carry out a long-cherished plan for Continental travel. Furnished with influential introductions, he visited the principal cities of France, Italy and Switzerland, and was everywhere received with respect and admiration.\* He seems to have made acquaintance with all who were most illustrious for learning and genius; he visited Galileo, “then grown old, a prisoner in the Inquisition.” At Paris he was entertained by Grotius; at Florence he was received into the literary academies, and gained the encomiums of wits and scholars by some of his Latin poems and Italian sonnets. His plans for further travel were suddenly abandoned upon the news of the rupture between Charles I. and the Parliament; “for,” he says, “I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home.” He had hardly been restrained from uttering his religious opinions within the walls of the Vatican; † he was now ready, at the

\* “In the present day, when we examine the archives and visit the libraries of the Italian sovereigns, it is curious to observe how frequently, in the correspondence of the most eminent writers of that age, we find the name of this young Englishman mentioned.”—*Lamartine*.

† “Whilst I was on my way back to Rome” (from Naples), he tells us, “some merchants informed me that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against me if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely of religion: for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion, but, if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I, nevertheless, returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character, and for about the space of two months, I again openly defended, as I had done before, the Reformed religion, in the very metropolis of Popery.”



first occasion, with all his ardor, to throw himself into the conflict that was rending Church and State. While waiting to be called into active service, he conducted a private school in London, and spent some of his time in poetical contemplation. Before leaving Horton he had written to his friend Deodati, "I am meditating, by the help of heaven, an immortality of fame, but my Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to soar aloft in the fields of air;" and in a letter written to another friend just after his return from his travels, he said, "Some day I shall address a work to posterity which will perpetuate my name, at least in the land in which I was born." Intercourse with Continental scholars and authors stimulated his ambition, and formed his purpose. The Fall of Man may have already occurred to him as a topic; but he had resolved to spend his strength on a poem of the highest order, either epic or dramatic. To this end he was pursuing his studies when the situation of affairs called forth his first pamphlet, in 1641. It was entitled, *Of Reformation*, and made a violent attack on the Episcopal Church. The storm of argument which it provoked, drove Milton out to a raging sea of controversy; and for the following twenty years he was the most powerful and active champion of Republicanism against Monarchy. Among the most successful of his early prose writings was his *Apology for Smectymnuus*.\* In 1644 he turned his attention to a question which was in no way related to the political agitation of the time, and wrote a series of elaborate and spirited *Works on Divorce*. An unfortunate incident in his domestic life provoked these papers; for in 1643, after a brief courtship, he had married Mary Powell, the daughter of an Oxfordshire Royalist. Disgusted with one month's experience of the austere gloom of a Puritan household, the

\* Stephen Marshall, Edward Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and W(illiam) Spurstow were joint-writers of a Puritan polemic, which was named *Smectymnuus*, the word being composed of the initials of their five names.

bride left her unsocial husband to his studies, and sought the merriment of her father's home. When Milton wrote requesting her to return, she ignored his letter; his messenger she treated ungraciously. Making up his mind that his bride had forsaken him, he elaborated his views on the question of divorce. The estrangement continued for two years, and then, learning that her husband was about to illustrate his faith in his own doctrines by marrying again, Mary Milton repented with all due humility. So thoroughly was she forgiven that her husband's house was opened as a refuge for her family when the Civil War drove them into poverty and distress. In the meantime Milton had written his tractate, *Of Education*, and had addressed to Parliament the most masterly of his prose compositions, the *Areopagitica*; a *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*.

In 1649 he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State. The elegance of his scholarship, and the soundness of his judgment, qualified him for the responsible position. His state-papers show with what zeal and ability he discharged his duties. While holding this office he undertook the last and most important of his literary controversies. At the instigation of Charles II., then an exile in France, Salmasius, an eminent scholar and the picked champion of the royalists, published an elaborate and powerful pamphlet in Latin, maintaining the divine right of kings and invoking vengeance upon the regicides in England. The royalists declared the argument to be unanswerable; and, indeed, it was too weighty to be disregarded. The Council, therefore, commanded Milton to undertake a reply. Accordingly he prepared his *Defensio Populi Anglicani*. In elegant Latinity he proved himself the equal of his adversary; in vituperation and in weight of argument, he was adjudged the superior, and he received public thanks for the victory won. It is said that the death of Salmasius was hastened by the mortification of his defeat. But Milton's work in the

preparation of his argument had hastened the loss of sight which had menaced him for years. Before 1653 he was totally blind; however, he continued to write many of the more important state-papers until the year of the Restoration, and was also occupied with a *History of England*, with a body of divinity, and perhaps with his great poem.

Through tracts and letters, Milton had opposed to the last the return of the monarchy. The Restoration was the signal for his distress and persecution. A proclamation was issued against him, and for a time his fate was uncertain; but he lived in concealment until the passing of the Act of Indemnity placed him in safety.\* From that time until his death he lived in retirement, busily occupied in the composition of *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Re-*

**1665]** *gained*. The former of these works had been his principal employment for about seven years. The second epic and the tragedy of *Samson Agonistes* were published in the year 1671. On the 8th of November, 1674, Milton died. He was buried in Cripplegate Churchyard. His first wife died about 1652, leaving him three daughters; his second, Katharine Woodcock, died in 1658, after little more than a year's marriage; but the third, Elizabeth Minshull, whom he espoused about 1664, survived him for more than half a century.

Milton's literary career divides itself into three great periods,—that of his youth, that of his manhood, and that of his old age. The first may be roughly stated as extending from 1623 to 1640; the second from 1640 to 1660, the date of the Restoration; and the third from the Restoration to the poet's death in 1674. During the first of these he produced most of his minor poetical works; during the

\* "He [Charles II.] offered to reinstate Milton in his office of government advocate, if he would devote his talents to the cause of monarchy. His wife entreated him to comply with this proposal. 'You are a woman,' replied Milton, 'and your thoughts dwell on the domestic interests of our house; I think only of posterity, and I will die consistently with my character.'"—*Lamartine*.

second he was chiefly occupied with his prose controversies; and in the third we see him slowly elaborating the *Paradise Lost* (126-134), the *Paradise Regained* (135), and the *Samson Agonistes* (136).

Those qualities which distinguish Milton from all other poets appear in his earliest productions,—in the poetical exercises written at school and at college. The *Hymn on the Nativity*, composed at the age of twenty-one, is a fit prelude to the *Paradise Lost*, the crowning glory of his ripened genius. With a peculiar grandeur and dignity of thought he combines an exquisite, though somewhat austere harmony and grace. The least elaborate of his efforts are characterized by a solemn, stately melody of versification that satisfies the ear like the billowy sound of a mighty organ. Apart from this energy of rhythm, his youthful poems are mostly tranquil, tender, or playful in tone.

The *Masque of Comus* (122) was written in 1634, to be performed at Ludlow Castle before the Earl of Bridgewater. The Earl's daughter and two sons had lost their way while walking in the woods; and out of this simple incident Milton wrote the most beautiful pastoral drama that has yet been produced. The characters are few, the dramatic action is exceedingly simple, the eloquence is pure and musical, and the songs are exquisitely melodious. Many of the qualities of this poem are imitations of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and of the *Masques* and the *Sad Shepherd* of Jonson; but in elevation of thought, in purity, if not in delineation of natural beauty, Milton has far surpassed both Jonson and Fletcher,

The elegy entitled *Lycidas* was a tribute to the memory of Milton's friend and fellow-student, Edward King, who was lost at sea in a voyage to Ireland. In its form, as well as in the irregular and ever-varying music of its verse, may be traced the influence of Milton's study of Spenser and the

Italian classics. This poem was fiercely condemned by Samuel Johnson. He declared that "no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure had he not known its author." But few who read the poem will accept such criticism. For force of imagination and exhaustless beauty of imagery it answers to a true poetic sensibility.

The two descriptive gems, *L'Allegro* (124) and *Il Penseroso* (125), are perhaps best known and best appreciated of all Milton's works. They are of nearly the same length, and are perfect counterparts. *L'Allegro* describes scenery and various occupations and amusements as viewed in the light of a joyous and vivacious nature; *Il Penseroso* dwells upon the aspect presented by similar objects to a person of serious, thoughtful, and studious character. The tone of each is admirably sustained; the personality of the poet appears in the calm cheerfulness of the one, as well as in the tranquil meditateness of the other. His joy is without frivolity; his pensive thoughtfulness is without gloom. But no analysis can do justice to the bold yet delicate lines in which these complementary pictures present various aspects of nature—beautiful, sublime, smiling, or terrible. They are inexhaustibly suggestive to the thoughtful reader; and they have been justly pronounced, not so much poems as stores of imagery, from which volumes of picturesque description might be drawn. Written in the seclusion of his home at Horton, they are fancies about mirth and melancholy; they are poems of theory, not of observation. They show us how a man who knew neither mirth nor melancholy would personify them. They are intellectual studies of emotion, not the irrepressible utterances of emotion.

Milton's Latin and Italian poems belong principally to his youth; many of the former were college exercises. He has had no rival among the modern writers of Latin verse.

The felicity with which he has reproduced the diction of classical antiquity is equalled only by the perfection with which he has sustained the style of antique thought.

Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney, and inferior poets had written sonnets, some of a high degree of beauty, but it was reserved for Milton to transplant into his native country the Italian sonnet in its highest form. He has seldom chosen the subject of Love; religion, patriotism, and domestic affection are his favorite themes; and most of them are ennobled by that sublime gravity which was eminently characteristic of his mind. Among his sonnets the following are worthy of special admiration: I. *To the Nightingale*; VI. and VII., containing noble anticipations of his poetical glory; XVI., a recapitulation of Cromwell's victories; XVIII., *On the Massacre of the Protestants in Piedmont* (138); XIX. and XXII., on his own blindness (137).

The second period of Milton's literary life was filled with political and religious controversy; and in the voluminous prose works which were its results, we see at once the ardor of his convictions, the lofty integrity of his character, and the force of his genius. They are crowded with vast and abstruse erudition, fused into a glowing mass by the fervor of enthusiasm. Whether in Latin or in English, their style is remarkable for a weighty and ornate magnificence, cumbrous and pedantic in other hands, but in his, a fit armor for breadth and power of thought. Milton always seems to think in Latin. The length and involution of his sentences, their solemn and stately march, his preference for words of Latin origin—all contribute to make him one of the most Roman of English authors. This quality, while it attests his learning, has combined with the fact that many of his subjects possessed only a temporary interest, to exclude his prose treatises from their true place among

English classics. They are becoming every known to the general reader.\*

The *Areopagitica*, addressed to the English in defence of the liberty of the press, is an oration in antique models, and is the sublimest plea that any age or country has produced for the great principle of freedom of thought and opinion. Its almost superhuman eloquence is rivalled by a passage in the pamphlet *Against Prelaty*, in which Milton confutes the calumnies of his foes by a glorious epitome of his studies, projects, and literary aspirations. The tractate, *Of Education*, embodies a beautiful but utopian scheme for bringing modern educational training into conformity with ancient ideas. Others of the finest of his prose treatises are the *Iconoclastes*, the *Defensio Populi Anglicani*, *Defensio Secunda*, and *A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*.

There is no spectacle in the history of literature more touching and sublime than Milton blind, poor, persecuted, and alone, "fallen upon evil days and evil tongues, in darkness and with dangers compassed round," retiring into obscurity to compose those immortal epics, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The **Paradise Lost** (126) was originally composed in ten books, which were afterwards so divided as to make twelve. Its composition, though the work was probably meditated long before, † occupied about

\* "It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should in our time be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery."—*Macaulay*.

† According to Voltaire, "Milton, as he was travelling in Italy, in his youth, saw at Florence a comedy called *Adamo*. The subject of the play was the Fall of Man; the actors, God, the Angels, Adam, Eve, the Serpent, Death, and the Seven Mortal Sins. That topic, so improper for a drama, was handled in a manner entirely conformable to the extravagance of the design. The scene opens with a chorus of angels, and a cherub thus speaks for the rest: *Let the rainbow be the*

seven years, from 1638 to 1665; and it was first published in 1667. Its subject is the grandest that ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. The entire action moves among celestial and infernal personages and scenes; and the poet does not hesitate to usher us into the awful presence of Deity itself.

In *Book I.*, after the proposition of the subject,—the Fall of Man,—and a sublime invocation, the council of Satan and the infernal angels is described. Their determination to oppose the designs of God in the creation of the Earth and the innocence of our first parents are then stated, and the book closes with a description of the erection of Pandemonium, the palace of Satan. *Book II.* records the debates of the evil spirits, the consent of Satan to undertake the enterprise of temptation, his journey to the Gates of Hell, which he finds guarded by Sin and Death. *Book III.* transports us to Heaven, where, after a dialogue between God the Father and God the Son, the latter offers himself as a propitiation for the foreseen disobedience of Adam. In the latter portion of this canto, Satan meets Uriel, the angel of the Sun, and inquires the road to the new-created Earth, where, disguised as an angel of light, he descends. *Book IV.* brings Satan to the sight of Paradise, and contains the picture of the innocence and happiness of Adam and Eve. The angels set a guard over Eden, and Satan is arrested while endeavoring to tempt Eve in a dream. He is allowed to escape. In *Book V.* Eve relates her dream to Adam, who comforts her; and they, after their morning prayer, proceed to their daily employment. They are visited by the angel Raphael, sent to warn them; and he relates to Adam the story of the revolt of Satan and the disobedient angels. In *Book VI.* the narrative of Raphael is continued. *Book VII.* is devoted to the account of the creation of the world given by Raphael, at Adam's request. In *Book VIII.* Adam describes to the angel his own state and recollections, his meeting with Eve, and their union. The action of *Book IX.* is the temptation, first of Eve, and

*fiddlestick of the heavens! Let the planets be the notes of our music! Let time beat carefully the measure, etc.* Thus the play begins, and every scene rises above the last in profusion of impertinence. Milton pierced through the absurdity of that performance to the hidden majesty of the subject; which, being altogether unfit for the stage, yet might be, for the genius of Milton, and his only, the foundation of an epic poem. He took from that ridiculous trifle the first hint of the noblest work which human imagination has ever attempted, and which he executed more than twenty years after."



then, through her, of Adam. *Book X.* contains the judgment and sentence of Adam and Eve. Satan, triumphant, returns to Pandemonium, but not before Sin and Death construct a causeway through Chaos to Earth. Satan recounts his success, but he and all his angels are transformed into serpents. Adam and Eve bewail their fault, and determine to implore pardon. *Book XI.* relates the acceptance of Adam's repentance by the Almighty, who, however, commands that he be expelled from Paradise. The angel Michael is sent to reveal to Adam the consequences of his transgression. Eve laments her exile from Eden, and Michael shows Adam in a vision the destiny of man before the Flood. *Book XII.* continues the prophetic picture shown to Adam by Michael of the fate of the human race from the flood. Adam is comforted by the account of the redemption of man, and by the destinies of the Church. The poem terminates with the wandering forth of our first parents from Paradise.

But no synopsis can satisfy the reader or assist him much in comprehending the poem. Nothing but an acquaintance with the work itself would suffice.

The peculiar form of blank verse in which *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are written, was first adapted to epic poetry by Milton. He has gifted it with a distinctive tone and rhythm, solemn, dignified and sonorous, yet of musical and ever-varying cadence, and as delicately responsive to the sentiments it embodies as the billow-like harmonies of the Homeric hexameter. Where it suited his purpose, he closely followed the severe condensation of the scriptural narrative; but where his subject required him to give freedom to his thought, he showed that no poet ever surpassed him in fertility of conception, that no poet ever saw the splendors of a more glorious vision. In alluding to the blending of simple scriptural story with imagination in *Paradise Lost*, Lamartine pronounces the poem "the dream of a Puritan who has fallen asleep over the first pages of his Bible." The description of the fallen angels, the splendor of heaven, the horrors of hell, the loveliness of Paradise, as exhibited in the poem, pass the bounds of earthly experience and give us

scenes of superhuman beauty or horror, that are presented to the eye with a vividness rivaling that of the memory itself. Milton's Satan (**127**) is no caricature of the demon of vulgar superstition; he is not less than archangel, though archangel ruined; he is invested, by the poet, with the most lofty and terrible attributes of the divinities of classical mythology. Milton is pre-eminently the poet of the learned; for however imposing his pictures may be even to the most uncultivated mind, it is only to a reader who is familiar with classical and Biblical literature that he displays his full powers.

Dryden and many later critics have criticised the subject of this epic poem, inasmuch as it makes Adam but the nominal hero, while Satan is the real one. The inferior nature of man, as compared with the tremendous powers of which he is the sport, reduces him, apparently, to a secondary part in the action of the poem; but this objection is removed by the dignity with which Milton has clothed his human personages, and by his making them the centre around which the mightier characters revolve.\*

After Milton's retirement from public life he was sought out by scholarly foreigners, who were curious to see him on account of the fame of his learning; and he received loving and admiring attention from many of his own countrymen. Among them was Thomas Ellwood, a Friend, who frequently read Latin books to the blind poet. One day Milton handed him a manuscript, and asked him to read it with care. Upon returning it, Ellwood said, "Thou

\* It seems probable that Milton had some difficulty in finding a publisher for his epic; but in 1667 he effected a sale of the copyright to Samuel Symons. By the terms of the sale, Milton was to receive five pounds on signing the agreement, five pounds more on the sale of a first edition of thirteen hundred copies, and five pounds for each of the two following editions when they should be exhausted. He lived to receive the second payment. In 1680 his widow sold to the publisher all of her "right, title, and interest" in the work for eight pounds; so that the author and his heirs received but eighteen pounds for the grandest poem of our literature.

hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?" This question suggested to Milton the writing of ***Paradise Regained***. By general consent the second epic is placed far below the first in point of interest and variety; still it displays the same solemn grandeur, the same lofty imagination, the same vast learning. Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness is the theme, and the narrative of that incident as recorded in the fourth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel is closely followed. This poem is said to have been preferred to the grander epic in the esteem of the poet himself.

The noble and pathetic tragedy of ***Samson Agonistes*** (136) belongs to the closing period of Milton's literary career. It is constructed according to the strictest rules of the Greek drama. In the character of the hero, his blindness, his sufferings, and his resignation to the will of God, Milton has given a most touching representation of his own old age.\* So closely has Milton copied all the details of the ancient dramas, that there is no exaggeration in saying that a modern reader will obtain a more exact impression of what a Greek tragedy was, from the study of *Samson Agonistes*, than from the most faithful translation of Sophocles or Euripides.

The last years of Milton's life, in which darkness nestled him under her wing, are a reminder of the fact that the world from which he was thus shut out had not then, nor

\* "They charge me"—thus he wrote to one of his friends, a foreigner—"they charge me with poverty because I have never desired to become rich dishonestly; they accuse me of blindness because I have lost my eyes in the service of liberty; they tax me with cowardice, and while I had the use of my eyes and my sword I never feared the boldest among them; finally, I am upbraided with deformity, while no one was more handsome in the age of beauty. I do not even complain of my want of sight; in the night with which I am surrounded, the light of the divine presence shines with a more brilliant lustre. God looks down upon me with tenderness and compassion, because I can now see none but himself. Misfortune should protect me from insult, and render me sacred; not because I am deprived of the light of heaven, but because I am under the shadow of the divine wings, which have enveloped me with this darkness."

has since had, nor will ever have, a distinct view of him. Milton's soul was the soul of a recluse. He was in, but not of, the seventeenth century. In moral and in intellectual power he was a giant, beside whom contemporaries were pigmies. The robustness, beauty, dignity of his life were such as might be looked for in a man chosen from some lofty and bracing epoch of history; and we are surprised at finding him in the sickliest age, breathing the miasma that brought disease to other men. He was miraculously kept from the religious fever that made some men insane, and from the taint of the moral plague that made others loathsome. This charm makes his life somewhat a mystery, and the effect of the mystery is heightened by the purity and elevation of his thought, and by the glittering and inimitable magnificence of his style.

Although we know much about Milton, we do not know him. We do not hope to commune closely with him. He seems to us a little more than human. When we have read the loftiest praises of him we feel that the critic has failed of reaching the elevation which a just criticism of Milton should attain unto. The rhetoric, the enthusiasm of Macaulay, do not cast as intense a light as we could wish for in viewing "the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty." There is a grandeur in the man that cannot be fitly described by the flushed fancy and the lavish strength of the grandest periods of the rhetorician. There is something about him that crowds our capacity for admiring, and yet forbids the familiar acquaintance that would give us rapturous love for him. Our ideal of him is less satisfactory than our ideal of any other of the great men in our literature; and the cause of his eluding us is found in the fact that he was a recluse. As Wordsworth said of him,

"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

The mystery that is about him, the haughtiness that detect in him, the grandeur that evades the critic's analysis, and the strange reverence felt by all who study him, are traceable to an awe-inspiring peculiarity that may be described as the loneliness of Milton. The companionships of other historic characters help the student; but Milton seems to have been without intimacies: the social temptations to which they yielded or over which they were victorious, the constancy or inconstancy of their friendships, the influences that they exerted over those who loved them, give us an idea of what our attitude would have been towards them, had we been of their company. But where shall we find the men who had intimate friendship with Milton. His loneliness was recognized and respected. His fellow-students at the university detected something peculiarly unlike themselves in him, and named him "The Lady of the College." The gentle woman who came to his house to be his wife soon found that she could not intrude upon his solitude. Amid the excitement of the Civil War he seems to have been companionless; and when victory had brought joy to all other men of his political party he was found in the seclusion of his quiet study, and was summoned to the public service of the state. During the years of the Commonwealth two men are superior to all other Englishmen,—the man of action, Cromwell; and the man of thought, Milton. Although mutually dependent, they were not intimate companions, for Milton stood in intellectual isolation. When the days of blindness and poverty and threatenings came to him and he was in his hiding-place, he was not withdrawn further than he had ever been from the world. His whole career was separate from the intimate acquaintance of men. His religious opinions would have been acceptable to neither party. Although he was a Puritan in politics, his theology would have been criminal heresy to the Puritans. In forming his political opinions he was not

influenced by the same reasons which swayed the men of his party; they beheaded Charles I. because he was the leader of a hated church; Milton justified the regicide because the unconstitutional exercise of regal power is insulting to nationality. It is this lack of affinity between Milton and other men, this want of contact between him and the world, this independence in political, poetical, and religious thinking—this loneliness of the man—that gives a peculiar dignity to his character, that overawes our love, and forbids our intimate acquaintance with him.

The student is referred to Masson's *Life of Milton*,—Dr. Johnson's *Life of Milton*,—De Quincey's *Life of Milton*,—Hallam's *History of Literature*, Vol. IV.,—Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*,—Lamartine's *Celebrated Characters*,—Channing's *Essay on Milton*,—Reed's *Lectures on the British Poets*, Vol. I.,—Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*,—Lowell's *Essay on Milton and Shakespeare*, *North American Review*, April, 1868,—the article on Milton in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,—Campbell's *Specimens of the British Poets*,—Taine's *English Literature*,—Landon's *Works*,—Masson's *Essays on the English Poets*,—and Addison's criticisms on *Paradise Lost* in *The Spectator*, Nos. 267, 273, 279, 285, 291, 297, 303, 309, 315, 321, 327, 333, 339, 345, 351, 357, 363, 369.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION.

FOR worthlessness of character and for the shamefulness of his public life, Charles II., the prince to whom the crown of the Stuarts was restored, stands without a rival in the line of 1660.] English kings. During the time of the Commonwealth he had found refuge on the Continent. His good-nature and his rank had won him hosts of friends; but as he was wanting in dignity of character, his friendships were not with the good. When he ascended the throne he inaugurated an age of debauchery and shame. The dissipated companions of his exile, and foreign adventurers who had fastened themselves upon him, were the favorites of his Court. His ambition was to ensure these worthless courtiers a good time. The gambler, the drunkard, and the libertine, found him ever ready to give them the royal smile and to join them in their criminal pleasures. Patriotism made no successful appeal to him. Decency fled from his presence. His halls of state were lavishly furnished, the doors were thrown open, and the rollicking king welcomed his subjects to his presence, where they could hear the profanity, could see the drunkenness and could suspect the baser infamies of the highest circle of English life. Under Cromwell's government severe restraints had been thrown about the people. Public amusements had been forbidden. Many innocent pleasures had been denounced. And now the Court laughed loudest at the unreasonable severity of the Puritans, and went to the farthest reach in a reckless pursuit of pleasure. The effect of such a revolution at court was immediate and fearful. The nation plunged madly into excesses.

Popular literature in any generation is but the reflection of that generation's thought, and so we must expect to find that the applauded writers of the time of Charles II. are men who laugh at

seriousness and apologize for vice. The drama of the time, as it appealed most directly to popular attention, was most outrageously vicious; but whatever writings came from other than the pens of Puritans were tainted with the disease of the Court.

The most illustrious literary representative of the party of the Cavaliers is Samuel Butler (1612-1680). When more than fifty years of age, after witnessing the success and the failure of the Puritans, he wrote a satire upon their follies in which he condemned them to a ridicule so keen that his work still holds the pre-eminent place in our literature of satire. His early life was passed in obscurity. He was of lowly parentage. Lack of funds cut short his stay at the University of Cambridge; still he was there long enough to acquire some of the learning displayed in his works. For several years he was clerk in the office of a country justice, and afterwards became a secretary in the service of the Countess of Kent. In these positions he found opportunities for study and for intercourse with scholarly and accomplished men. Next we find him a tutor, or clerk, in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, a wealthy gentleman of Bedfordshire, who, as a violent republican member of Parliament, and as one of Cromwell's satraps, took an active part in the agitations of the Commonwealth. In the person of this dignitary Butler probably saw the most radical type of Puritan character. With the convictions of a Royalist and with the temperament of a satirist, he must have found his situation uncongenial. It is possible that personal feeling quickened his powers of ridicule and suggested the plan of a sweeping satire on the republican party, and that he began his *Hudibras* (1663) while yet in the service of the gentleman whom he has so mercilessly lampooned.

The Restoration brought Butler no special reward for his loyalty. He became Secretary to Lord Carbury, and for some time acted as Steward of Ludlow Castle; but this situation was neither permanent nor lucrative. It was in 1663 that he published the first part of *Hudibras*; and the second part followed in 1664. The poem soon became the popular book of the day; for its wit and ingenuity won the praise of the critics, while its tone and subject flattered the vindictive triumph of the royalists. Charles II. carried it about in his pocket, and was constantly quoting and admiring it; but all efforts to secure



patronage for its author, either from the king or his favorites, proved fruitless. A fatality combined with the usual ingratitude of the Court to leave the great wit in his poverty and obscurity. Two years after the appearance of the third part of his famous work, he died in a miserable lodging in Covent Garden; and the expenses of his modest burial were defrayed by a friend.\*

As has been already stated, the poem of *Hudibras* is a burlesque satire upon the Puritan party, and especially upon its two dominant sects,—Presbyterians and Independents. It describes the adventures of a fanatical justice of the peace and his clerk, who sally forth, in knight-errant style, to enforce the violent and oppressive enactments of the Rump Parliament against the popular amusements. Sir Hudibras, the hero,—in all probability a caricature of Sir Samuel Luke, Butler's whilom employer—represents the Presbyterians. He is depicted as, in mind, character, person and bearing, a grotesque compound of pedantry, ugliness, hypocrisy and cowardice; his clerk, Ralph, is sketched with equal unction as the type of the sour, wrong-headed, but more enthusiastic Independents. The doughty pair, having set out on their crusade, first encounter a crowd of ragamuffins who are leading a bear to be "baited," and refuse to disperse at the knight's command. A furious mock-heroic battle ensues, in which Hudibras is finally victorious. He puts the chief delinquents in the parish stocks; but their comrades soon return to the charge, set them free, and imprison the knight and squire. They are in turn liberated by a rich widow, to whom the knight is paying court. Hudibras afterwards visits the lady; and her servants, in the disguise of devils, give him a sound beating. He consults a lawyer and an astrologer, to obtain revenge and satisfaction; and at that point the narration breaks off, incomplete.

Evidently the fundamental idea of this poem was suggested by the *(Don Quixote)* of Cervantes; but its spirit, and the style of its development, are entirely original. Cervantes makes his hero laughable, without impairing our respect for his noble and heroic

\* "While Butler, needy wretch, was yet alive,  
No generous patron would a dinner give;  
See him, when starved to death and turned to dust,  
Presented with a monumental bust.  
The poet's fate is here in emblem shown,  
He asked for bread, and he received a stone."—*Samuel Wesley*.

character; Butler invests his personages with the utmost degree of odium that is compatible with the sentiment of the ludicrous. As his object was exclusively satirical, he could not and did not consider any of the noble qualities of the fanatics whom he attacked. Much of his ridicule is therefore embittered by prejudice; but much more will retain point as long as cant and hypocrisy continue. *Hudibras* is the best burlesque in the English language. "The same amount of learning, wit, shrewdness, ingenious and deep thought, felicitous illustration and irresistible drollery has never [elsewhere] been comprised in the same limits." Butler's style is at once concise and suggestive; many of his expressions have the terse strength of proverbs, and at the same time open boundless vistas of comic association. His language is easy, conversational, careless; familiar and even vulgar words are found side by side with the pedantic terms of art and learning; the short octosyllabic verse moves with unflagging vivacity; and the constant recurrence of fantastic rhymes tickles and stimulates the fancy. Yet, although no English author was ever more witty than Butler, he is utterly destitute of genial humor; his analysis of character is pitilessly keen and clear; but he shows no power in sustaining the interest of a story. Hence he neither enlists our sympathy nor attracts that curiosity which is gratified by a well-developed intrigue. "If inexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure," says Johnson, "no eye could ever leave half-read the work of Butler; . . . however, astonishment soon becomes a toilsome pleasure, and the paucity of events fatigues the attention and makes the perusal of the book tedious."

Among Butler's miscellaneous writings which were published after his death, the most entertaining are a series of prose sketches. They are marked by that wit and wealth of suggestion which was characteristic of his genius. Many of his posthumous poems are caustic and indiscriminating satires upon the physical investigators of his day. He is particularly severe upon the Royal Society, which he ridicules in his *Elephant in the Moon*.

In this age of debauchery, John Bunyan (1628-1688), 'the master of religious allegory, appeared. He came from the lowest grade of social life, grew up to manhood with an education so meagre that he barely knew how to read and write, and yet he produced a work

which places him foremost among the writers of his class. What Shakspeare is to English dramatists, what Milton is to English epic poets, that John Bunyan is to writers of English allegory. In this department of our literature none approach him.

He was the son of a poor Bedfordshire tinker, and followed his father's trade until his eighteenth year. He then served for a few months in the Parliamentary army. Returning to his native village, Elstow, he married "one as poor as himself." He says that they had neither dish nor spoon betwixt them." Until this time Bunyan's course of life had been the ordinary one of a poor, uneducated village lad, stained with the vice of profanity, and too much given to rough sports. Doubtless his follies had often been denounced as heinous sins by the earnest Puritans of his acquaintance. His young wife was a devout woman, and she sought his reformation. By inducing him to read two religious books bequeathed to her by a dying father, and by leading him to the church of which she was a member, she succeeded in awakening his anxiety concerning the future life. Once aroused, his sensitive and imaginative soul could not rest. For about two years his mind was in a state of intense gloom, tormented with fears for his eternal welfare, and perplexed with the theological quandaries of the day. Finally, by what he always deemed a special exercise of divine mercy, his soul found peace. He united with the Baptist church of Bedford, and, yielding to the wishes of his fellow-members, he availed himself of his journeyings as a tinker to exercise the vocation of a preacher. The fervent piety and rude eloquence of his discourses gradually gained him wide reputation, and he became a leading man among the Baptists. As such he was exposed to rigorous persecution; for Dissenters were regarded by the government of Charles II. as in sympathy with republican doctrines. In 1660, having been arrested and convicted as a "common upholder of conventicles," he was shut up in Bedford jail. There he remained for twelve years, steadfastly refusing to purchase freedom by a sacrifice of his faith. The weary years were spent in working for the support of his family and in writing religious books. His patient and cheerful piety so won the confidence of his keepers that, during the last two years of his confinement, he was often allowed to leave the prison. In 1671 he was chosen preacher of the Baptist congregation in Bedford. A year later, when

liberated by James II.'s proclamation of universal toleration, he entered upon his pastoral labors with energy, and prosecuted them to the end of his life. The fame of his sufferings, his genius as a writer, his power as a speaker, gave him unbounded influence among the Baptists; while the beauty of his character and the catholic liberality of his views secured him universal esteem. His ministrations extended over the whole region between Bedford and London, and involved occasional visits to the metropolis itself. It was in London that his death occurred, in 1688, having been hastened by the exposure and fatigue of a journey which he had undertaken for the benevolent purpose of reconciling a father and son.

Bunyan's works are numerous, and entirely of a religious character. Only three among them demand our special notice,—the religious autobiography entitled *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and the two religious allegories, *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Holy War*. The first gives a candid account of Bunyan's own conversion, portraying in detail the struggles of a human soul striving to burst its bonds of sin and worldliness. It contains passages of sublime simplicity and pathos. The picture has interest for the philosopher of mind as well as for the religious devotee; though it is evident that both its lights and shades have been exaggerated by the enthusiasm of Bunyan's character. He was a dreamer; and from his childhood, as he tells us in this book, he had been haunted by fearful visions of the lake of fire.

*The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which Is to Come* (155) narrates the experience of a Christian in going from a life of sin to everlasting bliss. Christian, dwelling in the City of Destruction, is incited by an agonizing consciousness of his lost estate to journey towards the New Jerusalem. All the adventures of his travels, the scenes through which he passes, the friends and fellow-pilgrims whom he finds upon the road, typify the joys and trials of a religious life. Bunyan's imaginary persons excite all the interest and sympathy which belong to human beings. The doctrine of salvation by grace is the burden of his thought and the moral of his story; he writes for sinners perishing in an abyss whence he has been snatched. This makes him direct, fervent, pathetic. Occasionally, too, a vein of rich humor, outcropping in argument or description, indicates the genial healthfulness of his mind, and

draws him into closer sympathy with his readers.\* He had read but few books; the Bible and Fox's *Book of Martyrs* comprised his entire library during the twelve years of his imprisonment. He is said to have known the former almost by heart. That his mind was saturated with its spirit is indicated by the mode of his thinking, by the character of his imagery, by the very form of his expression. His style is nervous, plain, idiomatic; it derives strength and terseness from its large proportion of Saxon words; is often picturesque and poetical, sometimes ungrammatical; but it is always that language of the common people which attains its highest vigor and purity in the English Bible.†

*Pilgrim's Progress* is in two parts. The first was written in Bedford jail, to "divert Bunyan's vacant seasons," and was 1678] published in 1678. Its popularity was most remarkable.

After it had passed through eight editions, Bunyan incorporated with it the second part, in which the celestial pilgrimage is accomplished by Christian's wife and children whom he had left in the City of Destruction. From that day till this its popularity has continued; childhood and old age find delight in its story. Its translation may be found in every language which contains a religious literature.

The *Holy War* is an allegory typifying, in the siege and capture of the City of Mansoul, the strife between sin and religion in the human spirit. Diabolus and Immanuel are the leaders of the hostile armies. The narrative is far less interesting than the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Its style is less piquant and vivacious.

Few authors have secured a firmer hold upon the affection and sympathy of their readers than Izaak Walton (1593-1683). He was born in Stafford, and passed his early manhood in London,

\* "Ingenious dreamer! in whose well-told tale  
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail;  
Whose humorous vein, strong sense, and simple style  
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile;  
Witty and well employed, and like thy Lord  
Speaking in parables his slighted word."—*Cowper*.

† "The style is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a quick command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, if we except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables."—*Macaulay*.

where he carried on the business of a linen-draper. At fifty years of age he retired from trade with a competence sufficient for his modest desires; and he lived to the great age of ninety in ease and tranquillity, enjoying the intimate friendship of many learned and accomplished men, and amusing himself with literature and rural pleasures. He produced the *Lives* of five distinguished contemporaries,—Donne, Wotton, Hooker, George Herbert, and Bishop Sanderson, the first, second, and last of whom he had known personally. These biographies stand alone in literature; they are written with such tender grace, with such an unaffected fervor of personal attachment and simple piety, that they will always be regarded as masterpieces. But Walton's best production is *The Complete Angler* (158), a treatise on his beloved pastime of fishing. It is thrown into the form of dialogues—first carried on by a hunter, a falconer, and an angler, each of whom, in turn, extols the delights of his favorite sport, until the hunter is vanquished by the eloquence of the angler, and desires to become his disciple. The veteran then initiates him into the mysteries of the gentle craft, and as the two continue their discourse, technical precepts are interspersed with exquisite pictures of English river scenery, and racy descriptions of the fortunes of "angling days." Every page is spiced with the quaint thought of the philosopher of the rod; his sensibility to the beauties of Nature, and his cheerful, grateful piety find constant and happy expression; while the language of the book is as pure and sweet and graceful as its thoughts. An occasional touch of innocent, old-world pedantry only adds to its indefinable charm; and its popularity seems destined to endure as long as the language. A second part was added to the *Complete Angler* by CHARLES COTTON, the poet, an adopted son of Walton.

Another writer of this epoch whose interests were divided between literary pursuits and the never-cloying amusements of rural life, is John Evelyn (1620–1706). He was a gentleman of good family and considerable fortune, and merits distinction as one of the first Englishmen who practised the art of gardening and planting on scientific principles. To the timely publication of his *Sylva* (1664), a work on the management of forest trees, England is largely indebted for her present abundance of timber. *Terra*, his treatise on agriculture and gardening, appeared in 1675. Both

books display much practical good sense, animated by a genuine love of Nature.

Evelyn's personal character was a model of purity and benevolence; his household and his friends seem to have formed a little oasis of virtuous refinement in the general depravity of their time. Through a *Diary* (159), which extends over the greater part of his life, he has given us valuable historical information concerning business and social customs, and a mournful description of the unparalleled corruption of Charles II.'s court. His tone is always grave and dignified, very different from that of his loquacious friend, Samuel Pepys (1632-1703), whose *Diary* is the gossipy chronicle of the same gay and profligate era. Pepys began life as a subordinate clerk in one of the government offices. By his punctuality, honesty and devotion to business, he rose to the important position of Secretary to the Admiralty. He was one of the few able and upright officials connected with the government during the reigns of Charles II. and James II. The accession of William and Mary deprived him of his position, and the last years of his life were passed in dignified retirement.

The *Diary* (160), through which Pepys has immortalized himself and won the gratitude of posterity, was written in shorthand, and was first deciphered and published in 1825. It extends over the nine years from 1660 to 1669; and we have no other book which gives so life-like a picture of that extraordinary state of society which fell under the author's observation. Not only was Pepys by nature a thorough gossip, curious as a magpie, and somewhat convivial in his tastes withal; but his official duties brought him into contact with every class, from the king and his ministers down to the poor, half-starved sailors whose pay he distributed. Writing entirely for himself, he chronicles with ludicrous *naïveté* the successive details of his own rise in wealth and importance, all the minutiae of his domestic affairs, and of the dress, manners, and social amusements of himself and his associates. King, statesmen, courtiers, players, actually live again in his pages, and Pepys's own character—an interesting compound of shrewdness, vanity, worldly wisdom and simplicity—infinately enhances the piquancy of his revelations. His book possesses the twofold interest of the value and curiosity of its matter, and of the coloring given to that matter by the oddities of the narrator.

One of the most prominent figures in the Long Parliament and in the Age of the Restoration, was **Edward Hyde**, first Earl of Clarendon (1608–1674). He was educated for the profession of law; but at an early age he quitted the bar, and engaged in the more exciting struggles of political life. He sat in the Short Parliament of 1640, and was also a conspicuous orator in the Long Parliament, at first supporting the Opposition; but after a violent quarrel with the more radical champions of the national cause, he gradually transferred his support to the Royalists. Upon the outbreak of civil war he fled from London to join the king at York; and from that time forth was one of the most faithful, though certainly one of the most discreet, adherents of the royal cause. In 1644 he was named a member of the Council appointed to advise and take charge of Prince Charles, whom he accompanied to Jersey, and whose exile and misfortunes he shared from the execution of Charles I. until the Restoration. After the throne of the Stuarts had been re-established, Hyde reaped the reward of his services. He was made Lord Chancellor of England, created first a Baron, afterwards, in 1661, Earl of Clarendon, and for several years exercised a powerful influence in the national counsels. However, his popularity, as well as his favor with the king, soon began to decline. The austerity of his morals was a constant rebuke to the profligate Court; his advice, generally in favor of prudence and economy, was distasteful to the king; while, like many other statesmen who have returned to power after long exile, he failed to accommodate himself to the advanced state of public opinion. The people looked with distrust upon his increasing wealth and power, and demanded his removal from office after he had used his influence for the sale of Dunkirk. Charles II. was all too ready to sacrifice his minister to the general clamor. Clarendon was impeached for high treason. He went into exile, and passed the rest of his life in France, occupied in completing his *History*.

Clarendon's great work is the *History of the Great Rebellion* (156), as he, a Royalist, designated the history of the Civil War. It comprises a detailed account of the struggle, generally in the form of political memoirs, together with a narrative of the circumstances which brought about the Restoration. As much of the material was derived from the author's personal experience, the work is of high value; while the dignity and animation of the



style, in spite of occasional carelessness and obscurity, will ever rank him among English classics. Impartial he is not; but his partiality is less frequent and less flagrant than could fairly have been anticipated. Genuine regard for the welfare of his country is as evident in his writings as in most of the acts of his life. He is unrivalled in the delineation of character. Natural penetration and great knowledge of the world combined to make him an acute observer of human nature; and we are indebted to his spirited pen for many a lifelike portrait of his distinguished contemporaries.

"The great Cavalier-prince of historical portrait-painters outlived the great Puritan-prince of epic poets but a few days. Born in the same year, Clarendon and Milton stood all their lives apart, towering in rival greatness above their fellows in the grand struggle of their century. The year of the Restoration, which brought splendor to the Cavalier, plunged the blind old Puritan in [into] bitter poverty. But a few years more, and the great Earl, too, was stricken down from his lofty place, and sent a homeless wanderer to a stranger's land. To both, their sternest discipline was their greatest gain; for when the colors of hope and gladness had faded from the landscape of their lives, and nothing but a waste of splendorless days seemed to stretch in cheerless vista before them, they turned to the desk for solace, and found in the exercise of their literary skill, not peace alone, but fame. Milton wrote most of his great poem in blindness and disgrace; Clarendon completed his great history during a painful exile."\*

**Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1674) was a metaphysician, some of whose works belong to this period of our literature. He was born at Malmesbury, was educated at Oxford, as a student at the university was devoted to Logic and Philosophy, and in his maturity was a man of wonderful mental activity. Upon leaving Oxford he travelled on the Continent as a tutor to the young Earl of Devonshire, and till the end of his long life retained an intimacy with the Earl's family. His patron secured him the acquaintance of the most distinguished men of the day—among them Bacon, Ben Jonson, and Lord Herbert. Subsequently Hobbes passed several years in France and in Italy, and enlivened his studious pursuits by association with the most illustrious of his contemporaries—with Galileo and with Descartes.

Hobbes's earliest literary work was a translation of *Thucydides*. The first hints of his philosophical system were conveyed in two political treatises, published in 1642 and in 1650, for the avowed purpose of quelling the spirit of republicanism in England. They were both incorporated into his most celebrated work, the *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*. Therein he asserts that the primary motive of all human action is selfish interest; that human nature is therefore essentially ferocious and corrupt, requiring the restraint of arbitrary power to bridle its passion. From these premises the expediency of despotic rule is deduced. He was thus the earliest champion of that selfish system of Moral Philosophy which has found a more recent supporter in Jeremy Bentham. The *Behemoth*, a history of the Civil War, embracing the period between 1640 and 1660, was finished shortly before his death.

The doctrines promulgated by Hobbes were odious to the religious people of his time, and were most welcome to the Court. His style is a model of its kind—clear, nervous, forcible, it conveys the exact meaning and produces the exact impression intended. He was a man whose reading was profound; in the various branches of science and literature which he cultivated, he displayed that vigor which belongs to the thoughtful reader of few books.

The most energetic assailant of Hobbes's conclusions in Philosophy was DR. RALPH CUDWORTH (1617–1688), Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, a vigorous writer and a candid polemic. So fairly did he put the arguments of the Atheists, that he brought down on himself—most unjustly indeed—the imputation of Atheism. His great work is the *True Intellectual System of the Universe*.

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## JOHN DRYDEN.

"Without either creative imagination or any power of pathos, he is in argument, in satire, and in declamatory magnificence the greatest of our poets."—*G. L. Craik.*

"He was of a very easy, of a very pleasing access; but somewhat sour and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others."—*William Congreve.*

"My conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and unreserved. In short, I am none of those who break jests in company, and make repartees."—*John Dryden.*

"What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden! Sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation."—*William Cowper.*

"His plays, excepting a few scenes, are utterly disfigured by vice or folly or both. His translations appear too much the offspring of haste and hunger; even his fables are ill-chosen tales conveyed in an incorrect though spirited versification. Yet amidst this great number of loose productions, the refuse of our language, there are found some small pieces, his "Ode to St. Cecilia," the greater part of "Absalom and Achitophel," and a few more which discover so great genius, such richness of expression, such pomp and vanity of numbers, that they leave us equally full of regret and indignation on account of the inferiority, or rather, great absurdity of his other writings."—*David Hume.*

"I admire Dryden's talents and genius highly; but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are essentially poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind with an excellent ear. . . . There is not a single image from nature in the whole of his works."—*William Wordsworth.*

In the last year of the fourteenth century Chaucer died. Just three hundred years later **John Dryden** (1631–1700) dropped his pen, closed the bulky volume of his writings, and ended his eventful career. There is no special reason for naming these two famous poets together, except that by reminding ourselves of the three completed centuries that came between them, we may fix the dates of their respective deaths. As poets they were utterly unlike. Chaucer's muse would not dwell in-doors, would roam the fields and the highways, addressing itself to the leaves, the flowers, the birds and the people; but the retirement and the conveniences of the library gave inspiration to the muse of Dryden. His pleasure was in an argument rather than in a landscape;

there was for him more music in the rhythm of the epigram than in all the melodies of nature. During the Civil War and the Commonwealth the interests of his friends were identified with the Puritan cause. His association with the austere and unpoetical may account for his displaying few signs of literary precocity. At the age of twenty-nine he had written nothing but school-boy translations and odes, and an elegy on the death of Cromwell. Under a continuance of republican rule he might have used his abilities to achieve position in the state, without one thought of a poetical career. But the Restoration took place just as he was ready to enter active life; and the powerful relatives from whom he had expected preferment came into disgrace. It was necessary for him to begin the world on his own account, and he chose to begin it on the winning side. Taste to appreciate literary talent, and power to reward it, were both with the party of the royalists. Accordingly Dryden abandoned his Puritan predilections, published an ode of fervent welcome to the returning king, and joined the crowd which struggled for place and distinction around the throne. The revival of the drama had just reopened a lucrative field for the professional author, and Dryden found it expedient to devote himself principally to the stage. He worked with energy and tact, choosing the subjects suited to the taste of the time, and soliciting in laudatory prefaces the patronage of the powerful. He had already attained much dramatic popularity, when, in 1667, his first narrative poem attracted general admiration. This was the *Annus*

*Mirabilis* (142), written to commemorate the terrible Plague and Fire of London, and the War with the Dutch. Its dignity of style and its harmonious verse merited praise; and the fact that it was filled with unfounded eulogy of the worthless king by no means detracted from the fame of its author. The subject of Dryden's next production was equally fortunate. In an

elaborate prose *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, he upheld the use of rhyme in tragedy, and ranged himself with those who were trying to engraft French dramatic rules upon the English stage. From this time the rise of his fortunes was rapid. In 1670 he was appointed Poet Laureate and Royal Historiographer. The King's Company of Players contracted with him to supply them with three dramas a year.\* He associated with the favorites at Court. He enjoyed the patronage of the king; his income was respectable; the prestige of his honorable descent, his fine personal appearance and his brilliant talent, won him an Earl's daughter for a wife. He was the oracle of scholarly circles, and an admired member of fashionable society; while the versatile character of his mind, as well as regard for his own interests, led him to take an active share in public affairs. We owe some of the most powerful efforts of his genius to his participation in political intrigues. *Absalom and Achitophel* (144), his first and best satire, appeared in 1681, when such intrigues were especially virulent. It was a political pamphlet, written in the interests of the king's party, attacking the policy of Chancellor Shaftesbury; and at the same time it gave Dryden an opportunity to revenge himself upon his personal foes and literary rivals,—the Duke of Buckingham, † and the poets Settle and Shadwell. The enthusiasm with which it was received, confirmed Dryden's poetical supremacy, and seems to have acquainted him with his own powers. The attack upon Shaftesbury was renewed, in a second satire entitled *The Medal*, and in the following year

\* This engagement he did not long fulfill, for in 1694 he had produced but twenty-eight plays in as many years. He was still employed by the company, his services evidently being considered too valuable to be relinquished on any terms.

† In this satire, names from the Old Testament indicate the leaders of the Whigs, in Dryden's day. The Duke of Monmouth was Absalom; the Earl of Shaftesbury Achitophel; and the Duke of Buckingham, Zimri (145). Dryden had a special grudge against Buckingham for his share in the production of a popular farce, *The Rehearsal*, in which Dryden's dramatic faults were mercilessly ridiculed.

his brilliant *MacFlecknoe* \* brought discomfiture again to Settle and Shadwell.

In the same year his poem the *Religio Laici* (147), was written in eloquent defence of the Anglican Church against the Dissenters. It was probably the utterance of a man already perplexed concerning religious questions which were afterwards answered by him in a way altogether inconsistent with the sentiments of his poem. In 1686 he forsook the church which he had so powerfully defended and entered the Roman Catholic communion. The good faith of this conversion has often been called in question; for it coincided suspiciously with King James's proselyting measures. Many circumstances, however, tend to prove its sincerity; he patiently suffered deprivation and some persecution on account of his new faith, he carefully trained his children in the venerable church of Rome, he wrote his *Hind and Panther* in sympathy with her reverses.

The Revolution of 1688, by which William and Mary were placed upon the throne of England, deprived Dryden of his Laureateship. The Protestant Court did not smile upon the Catholic poet. But poverty, advancing age, failing health, and the malice of exultant foes, proved powerless to impair his energy; and his last years were the most illustrious of his literary career. He continued to write for the stage until 1694; but after that year he busied himself chiefly with translation. His poetical versions of Juvenal, Persius and Virgil appeared before 1697; and the very last year of his life was made illustrious by his *Fables*, a series of renderings from Chaucer and Boccaccio.

For twelve years Dryden had lived in obscurity and neglect; yet when he died in 1700, evidence of the high esteem in which he was held was promptly given; for while

\* Flecknoe was a vain, busy scribbler for whom Dryden felt great contempt. By assigning the name with a patronymic to Shadwell, that poet is represented as the heir of Flecknoe's stupidity.

his family was preparing to bury him in a style suited to humble circumstances, a large subscription was raised to give him whatever tribute there might be in an imposing funeral. His body was conveyed in state to Westminster Abbey, and was interred between the tombs of Chaucer and Cowley.

Critics have justly said that Dryden, more than any other poet, would gain appreciation\* from a chronological survey of his writings. In range of thought, and in power of expression, he was a man of steady growth. This development is indicated by the departments of composition to which he successively devoted himself. His panegyrical poems and his dramas which pandered to the corrupt sentiments of his age, were produced in the years of his struggle for recognition; his best dramas, his thoughtful criticisms, his satires, polemics, translations, fables and odes,—in short, all those works exhibiting the higher qualities of his mind, were written in the dignified maturity of his manhood, or in his noble old age.

In his first plays he is the representative of the great revolution in taste which followed the Restoration, supplanting the noble, romantic drama of the Elizabethan era by a travesty of French models. His comedies are degraded to the immoral public sentiment. There is in them no fine delineation of character, no flow of humor. They were popular because they were gross; and their author courted popularity as the means by which he could replenish his shrunken purse. Like all other productions of mercenary art, these dramas were soulless and mean.\* In tragedy he strove towards superhuman ideals of heroic and amorous life, and succeeded in being incredibly bombastic and unnatural. He seems to have been conscious of his own defects, for he exercised much ingenuity in concealing them from the

\* "His [Dryden's] indelicacy was like the forced impudence of a bashful man."  
—*Walter Scott*.

public. His comedies were enlivened by witty allusions and curious intrigue; his tragedies were sustained by picturesque situations and powerful declamation. Over all he threw the veil of graceful versification, easy, melodious, balancing grievous defects of sense by noble harmony of sound. His recognition of his own indebtedness to this help may have made him so long an advocate of the use of rhyme in tragedy. In his later years, an intimate acquaintance with the Shakespearean authors led Dryden to a juster idea of the province of the drama. He returned to the national use of blank verse, and developed considerable power in portraying violent passion and strongly-marked character. There is splendid imagery in many of his passages. In the preface of *All for Love*, the poet thus acknowledges the source of his inspiration: "In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare. . . . I hope I may affirm, and without vanity, that by imitating him I have excelled myself."

Dryden's non-dramatic poems were generally written in the heroic couplet, a measure which he wielded with peculiar power. Its regular structure served his purpose alike in argument, description, narration, and declamation. The flowing music of the rhythm, instead of weakening his thought, seemed to give it point and energy. His was a mind in which understanding outweighed imagination. The productions of his earlier years, the *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Cromwell* and the *Annus Mirabilis*, though they rise far above the level of ordinary productions, rise by virtue of excellences of style. But fourteen years later those excellences of style, when vitalized by deep thought and genuine purpose, electrified all England. *Absalom and Achitophel* exhibits the finest qualities of the English language as a vehicle for reasoning and description. It is full of masterpieces of character-painting, not always just, but always vigorous. *Religio*



*Laici* and the *Hind and Panther* display Dryden's power in that most difficult species of writing which masks abstract reasoning in poetical form. The arguments of each are clear. The powerful march of the thought, the noble outbursts of enthusiasm, the rhetoric, and the beauty of the abundant illustration, take the judgment by storm, and make us alternately converts to the one faith and to the other. *Religio Laici* is a direct expression of doctrinal views. The *Hind and Panther* is half-allegorical in form. Two animals are represented as engaging in an elaborate argument concerning the churches which they symbolize. The "milk-white hind" is the Roman Catholic, the panther the Established Church, while various minor sects take part in the discussion in the characters of the wolf, the bear, the fox, etc. The absurdity of this plan, half-excused by its novelty, is sometimes wholly forgotten in the scope it gives for picturesque imagery and witty descriptive touches.

Many beautiful *songs* are interspersed among the scenes of Dryden's dramas; but his most admired lyric is the *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*\* (150). It was written to be set to music, and celebrates the powers and triumphs of that art. In energy and in harmony it surpasses all other lyrics of our language.

Dryden's version of the *Æneid* is the most famous of his translations. The translator had a spirit much unlike that of the old master, and could not reproduce the spirit of the poem. The majesty of Virgil's manner is always tempered by consummate grace; and Dryden, however endowed with majesty, was deficient in elegance and grace. He was too free and careless to give a faithful version of the most accu-

\* "Mr. St. John, afterwards Lord Bolingbroke, happening to pay a morning visit to Dryden, whom he always respected, found him in an unusual agitation of spirits, even to a trembling. On inquiring the cause—'I have been up all night,' replied the old bard; 'my musical friends made me promise to write them an ode for the Feast of St. Cecilia; I have been so struck with the subject which occurred to me, that I could not leave it till I had completed it—here it is, finished at one sitting.'"—*Warton*.

rate of poems. A similar lack of adaptability is noticed in his renderings of the *Fables* from Chaucer and Boccaccio; but their flowing ease of expression, the frequent recurrence of beautiful lines and striking images, and their freedom from the author's fault of occasional coarseness, make them most welcome illustrations of his poetical power.

Dryden's prose writings are numerous, and must have weight in determining our estimate of his ability and influence. They are in the forms of essays, prefaces, or dedications prefixed to his various works. He was the first enlightened critic who wrote in the English language; but in criticism as in poetry he was a development. Macaulay acutely remarks, that no man influenced his age so much as Dryden, because no man was so much influenced by his age. *An Essay on Dramatic Poetry* was the earliest statement of his critical system. Its general spirit is that of servile conformity to popular opinion; but its reasoning, albeit from false premises, is cogent. The style of his prose writing was admirable; his English was lively, vigorous, idiomatic, equally removed from mannerism and from carelessness.

Interesting discussions of Dryden's life and works may be found in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Macaulay's *Essays*, Wilson's *Essays* (*Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. LVII.), Reed's *British Poets*, Vol. I., Hazlitt's *Works*, Vol. IV., Part II., Sec. IV., Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Vol. IV., *North American Review*, July, 1868, Taine's *English Literature*.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE CORRUPT DRAMA.

WHEN Dryden wrote for the stage, he degraded his talents, as we have seen, to the service of an immoral public. That same corrupt society debauched a company of brilliant men, younger than Dryden, who devoted themselves exclusively to dramatic composition. In aim and in manner they are so unlike the great playwrights of the preceding century that they are often spoken of as the authors of "The New Drama." The aim of Shakespeare and his comrades had been to portray nature and natural passion. Recognizing the fact that nature is infinitely complex, they had introduced comic scenes and characters into their tragedies, as they admitted elevated feeling and language into their comedies. In the new drama that followed the Restoration, an exaggerated, bombastic tragedy, on the one hand, was counterbalanced, on the other, by the comedy of artificial life. Material was drawn, not from nature, but from society. Declamation and pompous tirades displaced the old dialogue—a dialogue so varied, so natural, touching every key of human feeling. Wit usurped the province of humor; and the comic dramatists delineated, not character, but manners. They were apt in reflecting the spirit of their age; but they had no deep philosophic insight into human nature. Their works are a splendid revelation of the powers of the English language; yet few among them are capable of awakening a thrill of genuine sympathetic feeling. They do not deal with the springs of human passion and action; moreover there is an ingrained profligacy about them; and so, while they lack the one quality that would make them attractive, they display the spirit that makes them repulsive to the modern taste.

The works of Dryden may be regarded as the link connecting the older drama with the new.

**William Wycherley** (1640-1715) was the first of the comic dramatists who reproduced to the fullest extent the peculiar influences of his day. He received his education in the household of a French noble, and returned to England to become a brilliant figure in the society of London. His first comedy, *Love in a Wood*, was acted when he was thirty-two years old. *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, *The Country Wife*, and *The Plain Dealer* followed at irregular intervals, the last one appearing in 1677; and these four plays are the only results of his dramatic work. He soon after lost the favor of the Court through an unfortunate marriage, and the remainder of his life was melancholy and ignoble. At the age of sixty-five he made a vain attempt to regain public admiration by means of a collection of poetical miscellanies; but being stained with all the immorality of his youthful productions, and redeemed by none of their intellectual brilliancy, the book fell dead upon the market.

The small number of Wycherley's dramatic works, as well as the style of their composition, indicates that he was neither very original in conception, nor capable of producing anything, save by patient labor and careful revision. The leading ideas of his two best comedies are derived from Molière. But Wycherley, infected with the corruption of his age, modified the data of the great French dramatist, and so changed what was pure as to outrage moral sensibility. Setting aside this ingrained fault, Wycherley's plots and characters reveal much ingenuity and humorous power. His plays are admirably adapted for representation. Frequent sudden transitions of the intrigue fascinate the attention without fatiguing it, and give rise to striking "situations," which are always treated with masterly comic effect. The dialogue is easy, vivacious, amusing, and its touches of witty satire are frequent. *The Country Wife* is generally pronounced to be the best of his comedies.

In the esteem of his contemporaries **William Congreve** (1669\*-1729) stood pre-eminent among the comic dramatists. He had the tastes of the man of fashion, with the talents of the man of letters; and his education at Trinity College, Dublin, gave him

\* The inscription on his monument says that he was born in 1672.

scholarship far superior to that of his rivals. Going to London to study law, his graces soon made him a favorite in fashionable circles. Between 1692 and 1700 he devoted the intervals of social dissipation to dramatic writing, and produced five plays,—*The Old Bachelor* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1694), *Love for Love* (1695), *The Mourning Bride* (1697), and *The Way of the World* (1700). They were all received with favor by the public and by the critics. The brilliancy of the young author's talents won for him rich patronage. After the beginning of the eighteenth century he published only a volume of trifling miscellanies; but his reputation and prosperity continued to the end of his life. Successive ministers of the government vied with each other in granting him lucrative sinecures. He accumulated a large fortune, and commanded the society of wealth and of intellect. Dryden named him his successor in poetical supremacy, and Pope, in dedicating a translation of Homer, passed by powerful and illustrious patrons to recognize Congreve as the patriarch of letters. When he died, in 1729, he was honored with almost a national funeral.

Congreve's scenes are one incessant flash and sparkle of the finest repartee; and his wit, like all wit of the highest order, is invariably allied with shrewd sense and acute observation. He stands alone in his power of divesting this intellectual sword-play of every shade of formality. The conversations of his characters are accurate imitations of the conversation of fashionable life. This combination of exquisite naturalness and intellectual vivacity gives his style a charm attained by no other writer. His unvarying brilliancy involves certain corresponding faults. He falls into the error of making his fools and coxcombs as witty as their betters. His characters are without exception artificial—modeled on the plan of the men and women of society. Not one of his scenes is relieved by a breath of nature; indeed we have little intimation that he knew aught of either nature or simplicity. *Love for Love* is Congreve's masterpiece. Its characters are strikingly varied, and they relieve each other with unrelaxing spirit. Its intrigue, too, is effectively managed, and is better than that of any of his other comedies. His one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, written in solemn and pompous strain, though rapturously applauded when first given to the public, has now no power of pleasing. Its scenes of distress cannot touch the heart; its lofty tirades cannot stir the

passions. What enchantment it has for the modern reader is found in the power and melody of its descriptive passages.

Another popular author of this school was **Sir John Vanbrugh** (Vān-broo) (1666–1726), a famous architect. His dramatic talent is exhibited in five comedies,—*The Relapse*, *The Provoked Wife*, *Æsop*, *The Confederacy*, and *The Provoked Husband*. The first was acted in 1697; the last was left incomplete at the author's death. His fund of invention enables him to surpass either Wycherley or Congreve in developing a character or an incident to its full capacity for comic effect. His personages have an incurable habit of getting into difficulties, and inexhaustible ingenuity in getting out. All are sketched from life—swaggering fops, booby squires, pert chambermaids, and intriguing dames—and sketched with such vivacity as would make amends for any fault, save that of pervading coarseness and obscenity. The reader finds himself in bad company; for all the men are rascals, and none of the women are as good as they should be.

The comic drama of this generation found its last expression in the works of **George Farquhar** (1678–1708). He was an Irishman, who was dismissed from Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of eighteen, on account of some boyish irregularities. He then pursued the calling of an actor; but having accidentally inflicted a dangerous wound upon a comrade on the stage, he quitted his profession and entered the army. He soon entered the lists as a dramatist, and wrote his comedies in rapid succession. His literary career was crowded into ten years,—from 1698, when his first play was acted, until 1708, the date of his early death. His principal plays are, *Love and a Bottle*, *The Constant Couple*, *The Inconstant*, *The Twin Rivals*, *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux's Stratagem*. His heroes are in sympathy with himself,—happy, hot-blooded, rattling fellows, whose madcap pranks are prompted by the rashness of youth. They are much given to deceptions and wanton tricks, but betray none of the vicious coarseness of Wycherley's villains, nor any of the refined rascality of Vanbrugh's sharpers. *The Beaux's Stratagem* was the last of his comedies, and is also considered the best. It is an entertaining and ingenious portrayal of the adventures of two gentlemen who went into the country

disguised as master and servant. Whole scenes are filled with a rich humor which recalls the spirit of the older drama. In several of the other plays there are passages worked up into brilliant comic effect.

"The one feature which above all others forces itself upon our notice in every work of the whole school, is the absolute shamelessness of every person portrayed, male or female. Not one of their leading characters is represented with the slightest conception that the grossest vices are things to be concealed; chastity is derided by the ladies as unblushingly as by the gentlemen, and vice is not only rampant but triumphant."\*

Such glaring shamelessness did not go on unrebuked. A sturdy clergyman, **Jeremy Collier** (1650-1726), faced the scorn of playgoers, and presented himself as the champion of decency. He published *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, in which he defiantly attacked Wycherley, Congreve and Dryden. The pamphlet was written with fiery energy and with wit, and rallied the sympathies of all moral and thoughtful men in the nation. Dryden himself sincerely and gracefully acknowledged the justice of Collier's strictures.† A defence was undertaken by Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh; but the assault had been so vigorous, and was pushed with such resoluteness, that victory remained with the assailant. The controversy resulted in giving a better tone to the drama and to lighter literature in general, and from that time there has been a gradual improvement which has given to the readers of English the purest modern literature. Collier was the author of *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*, and an industrious writer in various lines of thought; but as his grandest triumph was won in his battle with the corrupt dramatists, we have placed his name in connection with theirs.

Among the exclusively tragic dramatists of this epoch the first

\* C. D. Yonge.

† "I shall say less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."—*Dryden, —Preface to Fables.*

place belongs to **Thomas Otway** (1651-1685), who died at the early age of thirty-four, after a life of wretchedness and irregularity. He received a regular education at Oxford, but very early embraced the profession of the actor. During this part of his career he produced three tragedies,—*Alcibiades*, *Don Carlos*, and *Titus and Berenice*. After a brief service in the army he returned to the stage; and in the years extending from 1680 to his death he wrote four more tragedies,—*Caius Marcius*, *The Orphan*, *The Soldier's Fortune*, and *Venice Preserved*. These works, with the exception of *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, are now nearly forgotten; but the glory of Otway is so firmly established upon these two plays, that it will probably endure as long as the language itself. As a tragic dramatist, his most striking merit is his pathos; and he possesses in a high degree the power of uniting pathetic emotion with the expression of the darker passions. The distress in his poems reaches a pitch of terrible intensity. His style is vigorous and racy. In reading his best passages we may continually notice a flavor of Ford, Beaumont and other masters of the Elizabethan era.

**Nathaniel Lee** (1657?-1692), in spite of protracted attacks of insanity, was able to acquire a high reputation for dramatic genius. In all his plays there is a wild and exaggerated imagery, sometimes reminding the reader of Marlowe. He assisted Dryden in the composition of several of his pieces, and wrote eleven original tragedies.

The career of **Nicholas Rowe** (1674-1718), like that of Congreve, furnishes a happy contrast to the wretched lives of many dramatists who were by no means his inferiors in talent. He was an admired member of the fashionable society of his day, and belonged to Pope's circle of wits and scholars. Secured against want by the possession of an independent fortune, he was also splendidly rewarded for his literary work, and enjoyed many lucrative offices. Rowe was the first who undertook the critical editing of Shakespeare; and to this work he owes his celebrity as a literary man. His own dramatic works comprise seven tragedies, of which *Jane Shore*, *The Fair Penitent* and *Lady Jane Grey* are the most noteworthy.

From the time of Dryden until the end of the first quarter of



the eighteenth century, English poetry exhibits a character equally remote from the splendid imagery of the Elizabethan era, and from the picturesque intensity of the modern school. Correctness and an affected regard for what was called "sense" were the qualities chiefly cultivated. The abuse of ingenuity which disfigures the poetry of Cowley, Donne and Quarles was avoided; but there was likewise a want of feeling. It is remarkable how many of the non-dramatic poets of this time were men of rank and fashion, whose literary efforts were simply the accomplishments of amateurs.

Consult Macaulay's Essay on *The Comic Dramatists of the Restoration*, *The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar*, edited by Leigh Hunt, Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Vol. IV., Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, Lect. IV.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIAN OF LOCKE'S TIME

#### JOHN LOCKE.

"The most elegant of prose writers."—*W. S. Landor.*

"All his contemporaries, and, what is better, all the known actions of his life, testify that no one was more sincerely and constantly attached to truth, virtue, and the cause of human liberty."—*Victor Cousin.*

"He gave the first example in the English language of writing on abstract subjects with a remarkable degree of simplicity and perspicuity."—*Thomas Reid.*

"We who find some things to censure in Locke, have perhaps learned how to censure them from himself; we have thrown off so many false notions and films of prejudice by his help that we are become capable of judging our master."—*Henry Hallam.*

"If Bacon first discovered the rules by which knowledge is improved, Locke has most contributed to make mankind at large observe them. . . . His writings have diffused throughout the civilized world the love of civil liberty; the spirit of toleration and charity in religious differences; the disposition to reject whatever is obscure, fantastic, or hypothetical in speculation; to reduce verbal disputes to their proper value; to abandon problems which admit of no solution; to distrust whatever cannot be clearly expressed; to render theory the simple expression of facts; and to prefer those studies which most directly contribute to human happiness."—*Sir James Mackintosh.*

"Few among the great names in philosophy have met with a harder measure of justice from the present generation than Locke, the unquestioned founder of the analytical philosophy of mind."—*John Stuart Mill.*

THE English Revolution of 1688 secured constitutional freedom for the state, and gave a powerful impulse to practical progress in science and philosophy. The period displays the names of Newton and Locke, the former famous in physical, the other in intellectual science.

The history of John Locke (1632-1704) epitomizes the most revolutionary influences of the English Age of Revolution. When the battle of Edgehill announced the final rupture between King

and Parliament, Locke was ten years old. As the son of an officer in the Puritan army, he was reared in the Puritan atmosphere of political independence and devout enthusiasm. A tendency to metaphysical speculation seems native to the followers of Calvinistic theology; and, doubtless, the natural bent of Locke's mind was encouraged by his early associations. When he entered Oxford, at the age of nineteen, he had already developed a taste for psychological study, and a habit of independent thinking. Independent thinking was not encouraged in a university which "piqued itself on being behind the spirit of the age." Locke soon discovered Oxford to be the citadel of the outworn scholasticism of the Middle Ages. He became filled with disgust at the empty subtleties which sheltered themselves under the name of Aristotle. In after years he frequently regretted that his early manhood had been passed under such adverse influences. However, there can be no doubt that the necessity of standing in constant antagonism to the conservative spirit of the university training was powerful in forming his intellectual character. During the thirteen years which he spent at Oxford—first as bachelor, then as master—much of his time was devoted to preparation for the practice of medicine. He thus came into contact with the vigorous and progressive spirit which was transfusing physical science. Meanwhile his interest in metaphysics was stimulated by attentive and independent study of Bacon and Descartes, and by familiar discussions with his friends. Locke possessed fine conversational powers; and his associates were chosen from among the brilliant and entertaining rather than from among the studious and profound. In its bearing upon the circumstances of his later life, and the tendency of his works, this fact is worthy of note. It indicates his remarkable union of the talents of the student with such tastes and practical abilities as make the man of the world.

In 1664 Locke assumed the secretaryship of a diplomatic mission, and remained on the Continent for a year. After his return to Oxford, he was for a time in doubt whether to continue in diplomatic service, or to begin the practice of medicine. The latter alternative seemed inexpedient on account of his delicate health. Conscientious motives prompted him also to reject a flattering offer of preferment in the Irish Church. At this juncture, a chance acquaintance with Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury,

determined his career. He recommended himself to this nobleman by a fortunate exercise of his medical skill, and confirmed his regard by charms of character and of conversation. Shaftesbury's own social qualities were of the most attractive order. Under the influence of mutual admiration and intellectual sympathy, a warm and enduring friendship arose between the two. Locke took up his residence in Shaftesbury's house, conducted the education, first of his son and afterwards of his grandson, and to a great degree became identified with his political fortunes. Enjoying the friendship and familiar converse of the talented statesmen who surrounded his patron, his attention was naturally directed to theories of politics and government. He filled various offices during Shaftesbury's two seasons of political ascendancy, and in 1679 assisted him and others in framing the constitution of the province of Carolina. When, in 1682, Shaftesbury fled to Holland under the accusation of high treason, Locke shared his exile and his disgrace. His intimate connection with the fallen minister made him obnoxious to the English government; and the bigoted loyalty of Oxford punished his championship of liberal principles by depriving him of his Christ Church studentship and by denouncing him as a dangerous heresiarch in philosophy. He bore his misfortunes with true philosophical fortitude, and chose to remain in Holland during the reign of James II. In the congenial society of many distinguished men who, like him, were exiles for conscience's sake, he devoted himself with renewed zest to philosophical study. His *Letter on Toleration* and an abstract of the *Essay on the Human Understanding* were both published before his return to England, in 1689.

Under the rule of William and Mary, Locke's public career was active and useful. He was made a commissioner of appeals; and as a member of the Council of Trade rendered important assistance in the reformation of the coinage. In 1690, the full edition of his *Essay on the Human Understanding* attracted general attention (161). In fourteen years it passed through six editions—an unprecedented sale, considering the times and the character of the work. In 1700 Locke's failing health compelled him to resign his official duties. He found a tranquil retreat in the home of his friend, Sir Francis Masham. The last years of his life were devoted to Scriptural study and devout contemplation, and in 1704 he died, at the ripe age of seventy-two.

In order to form a just estimate of the power of Locke's mind and of the extent of his influence, it is necessary to consider the age of which he was a part. He has been called the most illustrious of Bacon's apostles. The praise is not misplaced. Writing at a time when the Baconian method of investigation had half revolutionized physical science, he was the first to bring the philosophy of mind within range of the same improvement. Hobbes had already proclaimed psychology to be a science of observation, but he had been too intent on establishing such of its laws as might support his political views to make a comprehensive study of the whole. It was reserved for Locke to demonstrate the utility of the method of observation and experiment. Like his great master, Bacon, he sought *fruit*; his most abstract study evinced his union of the philosopher with the business man. In his great work, the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, he proposes to give a rational and clear account of the nature of the human mind, of the real character of human ideas, of the source whence they are derived, and of the manner in which they are presented to the consciousness. With unwearied patience he travels over the immense field of the mental phenomena, describing, analyzing, classifying, with a practical sagacity which is equalled only by the purity of his desire for truth. His work is, as Mr. Hallam justly observes, "the first real chart of the coasts, wherein some may be laid down incorrectly, but the general relations of all are perceived." The obligation under which he has placed succeeding thinkers can scarcely be over-estimated. When we censure his superficial investigations and his narrow views, we forget that he was the pioneer of a new path. We complain of his language as careless and unphilosophical. The style of his expression was determined by the object of his writing. He hated the empty and illusive jargon of the schools; he tried to bring abstract knowledge within the range of the popular comprehension. The *Essay* was the first English work which attracted general attention to metaphysical speculation. When public curiosity was stimulated by the attacks which were made upon its liberal views, the public read it, understood it, thought about it. Now that the inquiry which it provoked has produced such grand results, it is of no slight significance that a great modern philosopher calls it "the richest contribution of well-observed and well-described facts

which was ever bequeathed by a single individual, and the indisputable, though not always acknowledged, source of some of the most refined conclusions with respect to the intellectual phenomena which have been since brought to light by succeeding inquirers."

From the causes which we have already noted, Locke was less exposed than most thinkers to the dangers of visionary speculation. On the other hand, he frequently wrote upon subjects of intense personal interest to himself and his nation, and deserves credit for his freedom from passion and party prejudice. Witness the calm and impartial tone of his *Letter on Toleration*, composed while he himself was under the ban of his university and his government. The same qualities characterize his *Treatise on Civil Government*. This work inaugurated a new state of political sentiment in Europe. Undertaken in order to justify the principles of the English Revolution, it vindicates the justice of popular sovereignty. Locke's views are not always the most profound, nor his arguments always unimpeachable. He wrote from and for the victorious party in a contest which had attracted the interest of the civilized world. This doubtless increased the temporary effect of his reasoning. Nevertheless he did what no writer had done before him, and argued comprehensively from facts to principles. Like the *Essay*, the value of the *Treatise* is now in great measure superseded by the investigation which it provoked. In a practical way, the *Essay on Education* has been hardly less influential than the two preceding works. Locke himself had felt all the disadvantages of the prevailing method of instruction. He makes an impressive plea for a more liberal and practical system, both in the choice of the subject-matter to be taught, and in the mode of conveying instruction. Taken as a whole, his work is a monument of good sense and sincere benevolence. It did much to bring about that beneficial revolution which the last century has effected in the training of the young. Besides these works, there may be mentioned a treatise *On the Reasonableness of Christianity*, pervaded by a spirit of calm piety which decisively contradicts the statements of those bigots who have accused Locke of irreligious and materialistic tendencies. After his death a small, but admirable little work was published, entitled, *On the Conduct of the Understanding*. It is a manual of reflections upon those natural defects and evil habits of the mind which unfit it for the task of acquiring knowl-

edge, and was designed to form a supplementary chapter to his greater work.\*

*Cooper W.*

At the head of the theologians stands **Isaac Barrow** (1630-1677). Barrow was a man of universal and profound attainments. At the University of Cambridge, his studies took a wide range. He began his preparation for the Church before the establishment of the Commonwealth. After the ascendancy of Puritan principles seemed to have destroyed his prospects of preferment, he transferred his attention to medicine and the natural sciences. Even after his return to theological studies, he devoted much time to the classics and mathematics. In both he attained distinguished proficiency. At the age of twenty-nine he was made professor of Greek in the University; and with this appointment he soon combined the professorship of Geometry in Gresham College. In 1663 he resigned both chairs, to accept the Lucasian professorship of mathematics. In this position, which he filled with ability for six years, he fostered and befriended the rising genius of Newton, and it was to Newton that he resigned his office in 1669. His Latin treatises on Optics, Mechanics, and Astronomy, establish his rank among the best mathematicians of his age. Indeed, it is Barrow's misfortune that his scientific reputation is eclipsed by the superior splendor of his great successor. Had he not lived in Newton's time, and pursued nearly the same branches of investigation, he would have held a proud place among English scientists.

Previous to resigning his professorship, Barrow had taken holy orders, and had resolved to devote himself to theological pursuits. A brilliant and useful career opened at once before him. He was made one of the King's chaplains; his sermons soon became famous (162). In 1672 he was elected Master of Trinity College, the King remarking, as he confirmed the appointment, that he had given the place to the best scholar in England. In 1675 the list of his honors was augmented by the Vice-Chancellorship of the University of Cambridge; but he did not long survive this last distinction. His death occurred at the early age of forty-six, in the splendid maturity of his activity and his talents.

\* For further discussions of this topic consult Lewes's *History of Philosophy*, vol. II, and Sir James Mackintosh in the *British Essayists*.

Contemporaneous accounts state that Barrow's appearance in the pulpit was far from imposing, and that the beginning of his discourses was always hampered by diffidence and embarrassment. They add, however, that when his enthusiasm was fairly awakened by his subject, the magnetic influence of his oratory was irresistible. The dignity and grandeur of his sermons have rarely been equalled. They are filled and crowded with powerful and cogent thought; the most appreciative intellect needs to concentrate its full force upon the movement of their vigorous and comprehensive reasoning. Every sentence bears the stamp of the unconscious and superabundant power of a mind which found no subtlety too arduous, no deduction too obscure. Barrow attacks and vanquishes the most ponderous difficulties of Protestant theology with heroic ease. Many of his best sermons form series, devoted to the exhaustive explanation of particular departments of religious doctrine. For instance, one excellent series discusses the Lord's Prayer, which is anatomized, clause by clause. Another, consisting of eight discourses, treats of the government of the tongue; another, of the Decalogue; another, of the Sacraments. Each and all of these voluminous productions—for Barrow's sermons are seldom less than an hour and a half long—is instinct with fervent and devout purpose. The ideas are expanded with such mathematical breadth and exactness, that the expression sometimes becomes involved and laborious. But there is no empty writing; the language is always filled with thought. He is said to have been scrupulously attentive to the composition of his sermons, and to have subjected many to a third and fourth revision. His style is always pure, and nervous, and sometimes vivacious; occasionally single passages attain a rich conciseness. He writes almost without imagery or illustration. The teeming fancy which made Jeremy Taylor's discourses such marvels of poetical beauty was in him displaced by the intense activity of reason. There is, perhaps, no other writer of English prose whose works would be more invigorating to the mind or better adapted to the formation of a pure taste. Nor can there be a better proof that the most capable critics have agreed in this opinion, than the fact that Chatham recommended Barrow to his son as the finest model of eloquence, and that the accomplished Landor has not hesitated to place him above the greatest of the ancient thinkers.



**John Tillotson** (1630-1694), though his mental calibre was far inferior to that of Barrow, stands next him among the pulpit-orators of the time. While studying at Cambridge he made himself conspicuous by his decided Puritan sympathies; but in later life his views gradually assimilated themselves to those of the Anglican Church. He finally took holy orders, and in the reign of William and Mary rose to the dignity of Archbishop of Canterbury. The change of party seems to have wrought no effect upon him beyond an increase of candor and of indulgence for all shades of sincere opinion. His character was easy, good natured and amiable; he exhibited much honest zeal in correcting the abuses which had crept into the Church, and was a notable instance of liberal charity and episcopal virtue. He was renowned as a preacher; although his sermons fall far short of Barrow's in mental power and originality, they are quite as well adapted to command popularity. Good sense and earnestness are their most laudable characteristics; their piety is sincere without being very elevated, and their style is easy, perspicuous, and unaffected (163). Languor and tediousness sometimes mar their excellence of expression; the sentences are often singularly unmusical; and the evident effort to maintain a colloquial tone frequently introduces trivial images and illustrations. But Tillotson's sermons long preserved a wide reputation, not only as examples of practical piety, but as admirable specimens of composition. Dryden did not hesitate to own that his own prose style was formed after Tillotson's. "If I have any talent for English," he said, "it is owing to my having often read the writings of the Archbishop Tillotson."

**Robert South** (1633-1716), reputed the wittiest churchman of his time, was also the most bigoted of those clergymen who upheld the peculiar principles of the Stuart dynasty. He was an apostate from the Puritan party: Oxford had imbued him with the doctrines of passive obedience and the divine right of kings; and his resolute maintenance of these opinions combined with the qualities of his pulpit oratory to secure him great popularity during the reigns of Charles II. and James II.

By the animation of his manner, and by an amiable conformity to the prevailing sentiment of polite society, he charmed his courtly audiences. His sermons are easy and colloquial in tone, frequently enlivened by witty passages and pleasant anecdotes.

The judgment of our day detects his lack of devout sincerity, and condemns his fulsome homage to the royal power no less than his intolerant denunciation of liberal principles. But it must be admitted that he is a master of racy, idiomatic English (164). He has surpassed his greater and worthier contemporaries in his admirable blending of ease and harmony of expression with masculine vigor of thought.

There are few episodes in the history of human knowledge more surprising than the sudden and dazzling progress made in the physical sciences towards the end of the seventeenth century. This progress is visible in Germany, in Holland, and in France; but in none of these countries more than in England. It was just and natural that the vivifying effect produced by the writings and by the method of Bacon should be peculiarly powerful in that country which gave birth to the great reformer of philosophy. There is no doubt that the development of free institutions and open discussion exercised a powerful influence in facilitating research, in promoting a spirit of inquiry, and in rendering possible the open expression of opinion. The renowned Royal Society\* played a prominent part in the great movement, especially in the branches of physics and natural history.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born at Woolsthorpe, in Lincolnshire. From his earliest boyhood he showed taste and aptitude for mechanical invention; and entering the University of Cambridge in 1660, he made such rapid progress in mathematical studies that in nine years Barrow resigned in his favor the Lucasian professorship. The greater part of Newton's life was passed within the quiet walls of Trinity College. It was there that he elaborated those admirable discoveries and demonstrations in Mechanics, Astronomy, and Optics, which have placed his name in the very foremost rank of the benefactors of mankind. He sat in more than one parliament as member for his university; but he appears to have been of too reserved and retiring a character to take an active part in political discussion. He was appointed Master of the Mint in 1695, and promptly abandoned those sublime researches in which he stands almost alone among mankind, devoting all his energy and attention to the public duties that had been

\* This society originated in the meetings of a few learned men at each other's houses. It was incorporated in 1662, by Charles II.

THE SO-CALLED  
 METAPHYSICAL POETS.

{ John Donne,  
 Edmund Waller,  
 Abraham Cowley,  
 Sir William Davenant,  
 Sir John Denham,  
 George Wither,  
 Francis Quarles,  
 George Herbert,  
 Richard Crashaw.

RELIGIOUS WRITERS  
 OF THE  
*Civil War and the Commonwealth.*

{ William Chillingworth,  
 Sir Thomas Browne,  
 Thomas Fuller,  
 Jeremy Taylor.

JOHN MILTON.

THE  
 LITERATURE of the RESTORATION.

{ Samuel Butler,  
 John Bunyan,  
 Izaak Walton,  
 John Evelyn,  
 Samuel Pepys,  
 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon,  
 Thomas Hobbes.

JOHN DRYDEN.

THE CORRUPT DRAMA.

{ William Wycherley,  
 William Congreve,  
 Sir John Vanbrugh,  
 George Farquhar,  
 [Jeremy Collier],  
 Nathaniel Lee,  
 Nicholas Rowe.

THE  
 PHILOSOPHERS and THEOLOGIANS  
 OF LOCKE'S TIME.

{ John Locke,  
 Isaac Barrow,  
 John Tillotson,  
 Robert South,  
 Sir Isaac Newton,  
 Robert Boyle,  
 Thomas Burnet,  
 [Gilbert Burnet].



committed to his charge. In 1703 he was made president of the Royal Society, and knighted two years afterwards by Queen Anne. He died in 1727. His character, whose only defect seems to have been a somewhat cold and suspicious temper, was the type of those virtues which should distinguish the scholar, the philosopher, and the patriot. His modesty was as great as his genius; and he invariably ascribed the attainment of his discoveries to patient attention rather than to any unusual capacity of intellect. His English writings are chiefly discourses upon the prophecies and chronology of the Scriptures. They are composed in a manly, plain, and unaffected style, breathe an intense spirit of piety, and indicate that his opinions inclined towards the Unitarian theology. His glory, however, rests upon his purely scientific works, the *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*; and the invaluable treatise on *Optics*, of which latter science he may be said to have first laid the foundation (169).

“No Englishman of the seventeenth century, after Lord Bacon, raised himself to so high a reputation in experimental philosophy as **Robert Boyle** (1627–1691); it has even been remarked that he was born in the year of Bacon’s death, as the person destined by Nature to succeed him. . . . His works occupy six large volumes in quarto. They may be divided into theological or metaphysical, and physical or experimental. The metaphysical treatises of Boyle, or rather those concerning Natural Theology, are very perspicuous, very free from system, and such as bespeak an independent lover of truth.” His discussions of physics contain views that were new then, but now are commonly held; he discovered the law concerning the elasticity of the air, and was the first to note that the science of chemistry pertains to the atomic constituents of bodies.

One of the most extraordinary writers of this period was **Thomas Burnet** (1635–1715), Master of the Charter-house, author of the eloquent and poetic declamation, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, a work written in both Latin and English, and giving a hypothetical account of the causes which produced the various irregularities and undulations in the Earth’s surface. His geological and physical theories are fantastic in the extreme; but his pictures of the devastation caused by the unbridled powers of Nature are grand and magnificent, and give him a claim

to be placed among the most eloquent and poetical of prose-writers.

This writer must not be confounded with GILBERT BURNET (1643-1715), a Scotchman, who was one of the most active politicians and divines during the latter part of the seventeenth century (168). He held a middle place between the extreme Episcopal and Presbyterian parties; and though a man of ardent and busy character, he was tolerant and candid. He was celebrated for his talents as an extempore preacher, and was the author of a very large number of theological and political writings. Among these his *History of the Reformation* is still considered as one of the most valuable accounts of that important revolution. He also gave an account of the life and death of the witty and infamous *Rochester*, whose last moments he attended as a religious adviser, and whom his pious arguments recalled to repentance. He at one time enjoyed the favor of Charles II., but soon forfeited it, by the boldness of his remonstrances against the profligacy of the King, and by his defence of Lord William Russell. Burnet also published an *Exposition of the XXXIX. Articles*. On falling into disgrace at Court he traveled on the Continent, and afterwards attached himself closely to the service of William of Orange at the Hague. At the Revolution, Burnet accompanied the Deliverer on his expedition to England, took a very active part in controversy and political negotiation, and was raised to the Bishopric of Salisbury. In this office he gave a noble example of the zeal, tolerance, and humanity which should be the chief virtues of a Christian pastor. He died in 1715, leaving the MS. of his most important work, the *History of My Own Times*, which he directed to be published after the lapse of six years. This work is not inferior in value to Clarendon's, which represents the events of English history from a nearly opposite point of view. Burnet is minute, familiar, and gossipy, but lively and generally trustworthy. No one who desires to make acquaintance with a very critical and agitated period of English history can dispense with the materials he has accumulated.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ARTIFICIAL POETS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE *Augustan Age*, was the name given to the epoch of literature immediately succeeding the time of Dryden. It is generally spoken of as bounded by the reign of Queen Anne; but the best fruit of the writers of her reign ripened in the reign of George I. The vigor, harmony, and careless yet majestic regularity found in the powerful writers of the school of the Restoration were given a yet higher polish by the elegant writers of the first third of the eighteenth century. Three men stand in the front rank; and these three men who make their generation famous in the history of English literature were great as satirists. They expressed the critical spirit of the age. One of them was a poet; but his song, instead of breathing such love of nature or of man as other songs have, was filled with hatreds and contempt; another was an eminent clergyman, but his zeal spent itself in violating rather than in inculcating the gentle teachings of the gospel; the third, a man distinguished in the service of the state, was so genial, so gentle, so mirthful, that though he poked his fun at all sorts of English follies, he did it with such winning words and with such charming graces that satire lost its severity and was redeemed from its meanness.

## ALEXANDER POPE.

"He was about four feet six inches high, very humpbacked and deformed. He wore a black coat, and, according to the fashion of that time, had on a little sword. He had a large and very fine eye, and a long, handsome nose; his mouth had those peculiar marks which are always found in the mouths of crooked persons, and the muscles which run across the cheek were so strongly marked that they seemed like small cords."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds*.

"King Alexander had great merit as a writer, and his title to the kingdom of wit was better founded than his enemies have pretended."—*Henry Fielding*.

"If Pope must yield to other poets in point of fertility of fancy, yet in point of propriety, closeness, and elegance of diction he can yield to none."—*Joseph Warton*.

"No poet's verse ever mounted higher than that wonderful flight with which the *Dunciad* concludes. In these astonishing lines Pope reaches, I think, to the very greatest height which his sublime art has attained, and shows himself the equal of all poets of all times."—*W. M. Thackeray*.

"At fifteen years of age I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He encouraged me much, and used to tell me that there was one way left of excelling; for though we have several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct."—*Alexander Pope*.

"Pope's rhymes too often supply the defect of his reasons."—*Richard Whately*.

"There are no pictures of nature or of simple emotion in all his writings. He is the poet of town life and of high life and of literary life, and seems so much afraid of incurring ridicule by the display of feeling or unregulated fancy that it is not difficult to believe that he would have thought such ridicule well directed."—*Francis Jeffrey*.

"The most striking characteristics of his poetry are lucid arrangement of matter, closeness of argument, marvellous condensation of thought and expression, brilliancy of fancy ever supplying the aptest illustrations, and language elaborately finished almost beyond example."—*Alexander Dyce*.

"As truly as Shakespeare is the poet of man, as God made him, dealing with great passions and innate motives, so truly is Pope the poet of society, the delineator of manners, the expositor of those motives which may be called acquired, whose spring is in institutions and habits of purely worldly origin."—*J. R. Lowell*.

**Alexander Pope** (1688–1744) stands far above all other poets of his time. He was born in London and was of a respectable Catholic family. His father was a merchant who had acquired sufficient property to retire from business and to enjoy the leisure of his rural home near Windsor. The boy was dwarfish in body, and so deformed



that his life was "that long disease." His mind was precocious. Before he was twelve years old he had written an (*Ode to Solitude*) displaying a thoughtfulness far beyond his years. In referring to his early literary attempts he says,

"As yet a child, and all unknown to fame,  
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

During his childhood he indulged that taste for study and poetical reading which became the passion of his life. He had special admiration for Dryden, and once obtained a glance at the revered poet as he was seated in his easy chair at Will's Coffee House. At sixteen he composed his *Pastorals* and translated portions of Statius. From this time his activity was unremitting; and an uninterrupted succession of works, varied in their subjects and exquisite in their finish, placed him at the head of the poets of his age.

He was a most singular man in his appearance; so little that a high chair was needed for him at the table, so weak and sickly that he could not stand unless tied up in bandages, so sensitive to the cold that he was wrapped in flannels and furs, and had his feet encased in three pairs of stockings. He was in constant need of the attentions of a body-servant; he could not dress or undress himself. His deformity gave him the nickname of "The Interrogation Point." But this unfortunate man had a fine face and a famous, glowing eye. In his dress he was fastidious, appearing in a court suit, decorated with a little sword. His manners, too, were elegant. Whether patient or impatient about it, he had to bear the constant reminder of his physical infirmities as he looked upon the stately figures of men who were his companions and his literary rivals. Rollicking Dick Steele was large and strong, Addison had the fatness ascribed to good-nature, Swift was compelled to exercise most vigorously in keeping down his flesh, Gay and Thomson were hale; these jolly men could spend their nights in choice revelries,

laughing over the best of wit and humor, but "poor Pope" had no stomach, he must be quiet and thin and sick.

Pope's culture was not gained in the school-room. He was permitted to roam over the fields of learning wherever his fancy might lead him. The songs of stately writers had most charm for him, and so he studied Spenser, Waller and Dryden. They were men who believed that poetry consisted in elegant expression, rather than in the thought; they had detected and disclosed the arts of poetry. They had gained more success than others in the very walk where Pope must journey, if he would listen to the call of his muse, and he was true to the bent of his nature in seeking culture from them. Pope's father was a bookseller, who had the taste for literature commonly found in men of his trade. He fondly watched the spark of genius in his boy, and gently fanned it into flame by assigning the subjects for his song, and by praising or censuring when the little poet had done his singing. This was the best culture given to that boyhood.

On account of his helplessness throughout his life, Pope, like a child, was specially subject to the influence of those who petted him. His mother, though ignorant, simple-hearted, and ruled by her doting love, influenced him in all things, even in his literary work. Until her death the poet was her child, her "deare." She could tell him more confidently than another could, how wonderful he was. As he was more sensitive to ridicule than any other man ever was, he was also more fond of praise. He had a sickly craving for admiration; and that doting mother, by satisfying his craving, helped him. She nursed the self-appreciation which cheered him in his work. Swift, too, gave him the praise he asked. The Dean of Dublin had but to say, "When you think of the world, give it one more lash at my request," and he could inspire the poet. The *Dunciad* is more defiant, sharper, more cruel than it could have been had Pope

not found an applauding brother in him who hated and detested everything and everybody except the few whom he loved. The wit, the eloquence, the elegance, the literary taste and the political sentiments of the Viscount Bolingbroke made him the object of Pope's admiration. His dazzling life blinded Pope to his faults. An intimate friendship between them brought the poet under powerful and pernicious influences. To have one's distinguishing weakness nourished as Pope's was by his mother, to be loved by the sturdiest, heartiest and most terrible hater the world has produced, and to receive the patronage and praises of the most dashing, the most attractive and the most worthless public man of the time, was enough to deform even a poet's soul.

Before considering Pope's literary work, we must remind ourselves of the peculiar influence exerted upon him by his age. Much that has been charged upon him belongs to the time in which he wrote. Was he narrow? was he shallow? was he conceited? The age was so. All of its writers have caught its spirit, though it may be that Pope is its most striking representative. There was conceit in the air. It was the special weakness of Englishmen throughout the eighteenth century, and specially in the earlier part of it, to be satisfied with their work. The security of the government seemed to be established, wealth was accumulating, the influence of the nation abroad was increasing, and the moral tone of the literature was improving. Indeed, there was a peculiar complacency toward the literature; and there was reason in this complacency, for the age was the first one using the press to an extent that made it a far-reaching power among the people. Under these influences, political, social and literary, the English life, the national conceit, was stimulated. There was a conviction that the age had better *sense* than any one of its predecessors. In his essay on Dryden and Pope, Hazlitt calls attention to the expression

of this sentiment in the poetry of the time, and shows that Pope was subject to its influence. Even the rhyming of his verse was unconsciously affected by the watch-word, "sense."\*

*The Essay on Criticism* (170) published in 1711 was the first poem that fixed Pope's reputation and gave him a foretaste of the popularity which he was to enjoy during the remainder of his life. It was a remarkable production for a man of twenty years; yet much of the praise given to it is extravagant. It has no claim to originality. It is merely a collating of the principles of criticism stated by Horace, by Shakespeare and other poets and critics. Still in the poem there are sparkling beauties, and there is music in its cadence answering to the severe demands of

\*"As a proof of the exclusive attention which it occupied in their minds, it is remarkable that in the *Essay on Criticism* (not a very long poem) there are no less than half a score of successive couplets rhyming to the word *sense*. This appears almost incredible without giving the instances, and no less so when they are given."

"But of the two, less dangerous is the offence  
To tire our patience than mislead our sense."  
lines 3, 4.

"In search of wit these lose their common sense,  
And then turn critics in their own defence."  
l. 28, 29.

"Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,  
And fills up all the mighty void of sense."  
l. 209, 10.

"Some by old words to fame have made pretence,  
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense."  
l. 324, 5.

"Tis not enough no harshness gives offence;  
The sound must seem an echo to the sense."  
l. 364, 5.

"At every trifle scorn to take offence;  
That always shows great pride or little sense."  
l. 386, 7.

"Be silent always, when you doubt your sense,  
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence."  
l. 366, 7.

"Be niggards of advice on no pretence,  
For the worst avarice is that of sense."  
l. 578, 9.

poetic art. It is dainty, but not insipid ; it has fervor, without any sacrifice of dignity ; though lacking originality, it is not lacking in excellence of judgment. Pope's aim seems to have been to produce faultless verse ; but in this poem his aim was not certain. Many an unfriendly critic has called attention to his faulty rhymes. Indeed he gave himself license to do what he would have ridiculed in another. But whatever its aspect may be, it has the excellence of concise and vigorous expression to such a degree that it has supplied our current literature with pithy and beautiful quotations in larger numbers than any other poem of equal length not written by Shakespeare or Milton.

A man of over-nice taste exhausts himself and wearies his readers by discussing profound themes. Had Pope confined his thoughts to the philosophy of criticism, or to the study of man, his charming poetical talent had been undiscovered. The lighter argument, the fanciful narrative, the raillery of the drawing-room, display his sparkling talents. In writing upon themes of this nature he is most charming. *The Rape of the Lock* (172), sketched in his early literary life, illustrates his pre-eminence. It is the most sparkling of his works, a masterpiece, equally felicitous in its plan and in its execution. Addison pronounced it "a delicious little th'ng," and later critics agree in thinking that it is superior to any other mock-heroic composition. The correct principles of such composition are sustained in that poem better than in any other. Lord Petre, a man of fashion at the court of Queen Anne, had cut a lock of hair from the head of Arabella Fermor, a beautiful young maid of honor, and by the act had given such offence that a quarrel had ensued between the two families. Pope's poem was an attempt to laugh the quarrelers into good nature. In this he was not successful, but he wrote with such grace and pleasantry that his fame was heightened. Addison was so delighted by the first sketch of the poem that he strongly

advised Pope to refrain from attempting any amendment; but Pope, fortunately for his glory, added supernatural characters to the story, with exquisite skill adapting sylphs and gnomes to the frivolous persons and events of the poem.

In 1713 he published his pastoral eclogues entitled *Windsor Forest*. Their beauty of versification and neatness of diction do all they can to compensate for the absence of that deep feeling for Nature which the poetry of the eighteenth century did not possess. The plan of this work is principally borrowed from Denham's *Cooper's Hill*. In 1715 Pope published several modernized versions of Chaucer, as if he were desirous in all things to imitate his great master, Dryden.

At this time, too, Pope undertook the laborious enterprise of translating into English verse the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He was at first reduced almost to despair when brought face to face with the vastness of his undertaking; but with practice came facility, and the whole of the *Iliad* was successfully given to the world by the year 1720. The work was published by subscription. In a pecuniary sense it was a most successful venture; for Pope thereby laid the foundation of that competence which he enjoyed with good sense and moderation. The *Odyssey* did not appear till five years later; and of this he himself translated only twelve of the twenty-four books, employing for the remaining half the assistance of respectable contemporary poets. Mechanically this translation is not unfaithful; but in reproducing the spirit of the original, the ballad-like version of Chapman is far superior. Bentley's criticism is, after all, the best and most comprehensive that has yet been made on this work: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." It is unfortunate that Dryden and Pope had not exchanged parts in their selection of the two ancient epic writers as subjects of translation. Dryden, though perhaps incapable of reproducing the wonderful freshness and gran-

deur of Homer, still possessed more of the Homeric quality of fire and animation ; while Pope, in whom consummate grace and finish is the prevailing merit, would have far more successfully reproduced the unsurpassed dignity, the chastened majesty, of Virgil. In Dryden, a vigorous, careless, self-assured dexterity is perceptible, not accompanied by much passion, nor by much depth of sentiment, but imposing from its conscious ease ; in Pope, we find keener thought, more refined acuteness, and fastidious neatness of expression. Both are admirable for perfect clearness of meaning ; both excel in the delineation of artificial life, in the analysis of conduct ; both are deficient in appreciation of external nature and of simple humanity.

Other compositions of Pope belonging to his early life, are the *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*, the *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon*, borrowed from the *Heroides* of Ovid, and the *Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard*. These works, though somewhat artificial, express a passion so intense, and are illustrated with such beautiful imagery, that they will ever be considered masterpieces. During this part of his life Pope was living, with his father and mother, at Chiswick ; but on the death of his father, he removed with his mother to a villa he had purchased at Twickenham, on a most beautiful spot on the banks of the Thames. There he passed the remainder of his life, in easy, if not in opulent circumstances ; his taste for gardening, and his grotto and quincunxes in which he delighted, amused his leisure. He lived in familiar intercourse with illustrious statesmen, orators, and men of letters of his day,—with Swift, Atterbury, Bolingbroke, Prior, Gay, and Arbuthnot. In 1725 he published an *Edition of Shakespeare*, in six volumes, and in it exhibited a deficiency in that peculiar kind of knowledge which is indispensable to the commentator on an old author. This work was but too justly criticised by Theobald in his *Shakespeare Restored*, an offence deeply resented by the sensitive poet ; and we shall

see by-and-by how savagely he revenged himself. During the three years following he was engaged, together with Swift and Arbuthnot, in composing that famous collection of *Miscellanies* to which each of the friends contributed. The principal project of the fellow-laborers was the extensive satire of the abuses of learning and the extravagances of philosophy. It was entitled *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. Pope's admirable satiric genius, however, seems to have deserted him instantly when he abandoned verse for prose. With the exception of Arbuthnot's inimitable burlesque *History of John Bull*, these *Miscellanies* are hardly worthy the fame of their authors.

Pope's brilliant success, his steady popularity, the tinge of vanity and malignity in his disposition, and above all, the supercilious tone in which he speaks of the struggles of literary existence, raised around him a swarm of enemies, animated alike by envy and revenge. Determining, therefore, to inflict upon these gnats and mosquitoes of the press a memorable castigation, he composed the satire of the *Dunciad*, the primary idea of which may have been suggested by Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*. It is incomparably the fiercest, most sweeping, and most powerful literary satire that exists in the whole range of literature. In it he flays and boils and roasts and dismembers the scribblers whom he attacks. Most of them are so obscure that their names are now rescued from oblivion by being embalmed in Pope's satire, like rubbish preserved in the lava of a volcano; but in the latter part of the poem, and particularly in the portion added in the editions of 1742 and 1743, the poet has given a sketch of the gradual decline and corruption of taste and learning in Europe, which is one of the noblest outbursts of his genius. The plot of the poem—the Iliad of the Dunces—is not very ingenious. Pope supposes that the throne of Dulness is left vacant by the death of Shadwell, and that the various aspirants to “that bad eminence”



engage in a series of trials, like the Olympic Games of old, to determine who shall inherit it. In the original form of the poem, as it appeared in 1728 and 1729, the palm of pedantry and stupidity was given to Theobald, Pope's successful rival in editing Shakespeare. In the new edition of 1743, published just before the poet's death, Theobald was degraded from the throne, and the crown was given to the poet laureate, Colley Cibber, an actor, manager, and dramatic author of the time, who, whatever were his vices, certainly was in no sense an appropriate King of the Dunces. But in this, as in numberless other instances, Pope's bitterness of enmity ran away with his judgment. The poem is an admirable—almost a fearful—example of the highest genius applied to the most selfish of ends.

In the four years extending from 1731 to 1735, Pope was engaged in the composition of his *Epistles*, addressed to Burlington, Cobham, Arbuthnot, Bathurst, and other distinguished men. These poems, half satirical and half familiar, were in their manner a reproduction of the charming epistles of Horace.

*The Essay on Man*, written in this period of his literary work, was published in four epistles addressed to Bolingbroke. The arguments of the poem are not convincing, nor are the conclusions just. It furnishes an illustration of the incompatibility between the higher order of poetry and abstract reasoning; for close reasoning is generally found to injure the effect of verse, and the ornament of verse as generally detracts from the vigor of argument. The first epistle treats of man in his relation to the universe, the second in his relation to himself, the third in his relation to society, and the fourth, with respect to his ideas of happiness. Throughout the poem the exquisite neatness and conciseness of the language, the unvarying melody of the verse, and the beauty and fidelity of the illustrations prove that if the poet has not produced a perfect model of didac-

tic poetry, it is simply for the reason that such an object is beyond the attainment of man.

*Imitations of Horace*, in which he adapted the topics of the Roman satirist to the persons and vices of his own day, were Pope's latest works.

On the 30th of May, 1744, this poet died. He was unquestionably the most illustrious of artificial writers, hardly inferior to Swift in the vigor and the originality of his genius. The last years of his life were very gloomy, for he was without the genial companionships in which he had found delight. Addison was estranged from him. Swift was sunk in idiocy. Atterbury and Gay were dead, and his mother too was gone.

His quarrel with Addison has been explained in various ways, but a knowledge of their characters and a plain statement of a few facts are enough to show how impossible it was that the man of grand self-respect and the man of intense self-esteem should retain each other's confidence. When the young poet began his literary career, he paid deference to the name of the great Oxford scholar, sought his friendship, and won his favor. Whether Addison was jealous of Pope's increasing fame may be questioned, but it is certain that Pope was resentful towards Addison for his too frank criticisms of the *Essay on Criticism* and *The Rape of the Lock*. Their open unfriendliness was probably caused by Pope's spiteful assault on old John Dennis for his "Remarks on the Tragedy of Cato." Addison was suspected of making this assault, and in relieving himself of the suspicion, he quietly said that, had he answered the remarks, he would have done it as a gentleman should. Pope never forgave this rebuke. It was too severe to be forgotten. The attempts of friends, and even their own reciprocations of literary compliments, did not restore friendly relations. It was a most dignified quarrel on the part of Pope, when compared with the bitterness of his quarrels with others. The

victims of the *Dunciad*, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu knew the cruelty of "The Wicked Wasp of Twickenham."

As a man, Pope was a strange mixture of selfishness and generosity, malignity and tolerance; he was fond of indirect and cunning courses; and his intense literary ambition showed itself sometimes in meannesses and jealousies. Concerning his merits as a poet, the knights of criticism have had many and spirited encounters. They began to quarrel in Pope's day, and though they are not now as excited as they were then, they are quite as arrogant. This irrepressible conflict of opinion is due to the fact that there are two grand divisions of poetry, and two races of poets. There is the poetry that is natural, and the poetry that is artificial; the poetry that is spontaneous, bursting into blaze, giving fire and energy to the language which expresses the intense feeling of the poet, and the verse in which the emotions flicker and must be patiently fanned into flame. There is poetry having the power and dignity of passion, and poetry having the power and dignity of elegance. The poet of passion forgets himself in his frenzy, utters the feelings that bubble from his heart, and is in agony until his feelings are expressed. Poetry is to him what harmony is to a musical genius, what color is to a great painter, what form is to the sculptor. But there are sculptors and painters and composers who, without genius, have the power to please, whose work is less open to a criticism of details than the work of a greater artist. They may please by elegant finish, by freedom from faults, while another gives his admirers intenser pleasure as he paints, chisels, or utters bolder and grander ideas unpolished. And so among the poets, there are those who please by accuracy of details and those who charm by the massive grandeur of their thoughts.

What end does poetry serve? Jeffrey, the keenest of critics, Wordsworth and Coleridge, the most patient thinkers in the philosophy of poetry, teach that the end of poetry is

to give pleasure. Their definitions turn against them when they propose to strike Pope's name from the list of poets. If there be two general divisions of taste among people of literary culture, there must be two general classes of poets. The array of critics who have praised Pope's verse, proves that no mean place can be assigned him among our poets. He must be ranked first among those whose power of pleasing is found in their conformity to the laws of rhythm, in the studied music of their song. He must not be named with Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, for he has not sublime thoughts, he has not broad and profound sympathies. Nature does not enchant him. Art in life and in literature commanded his highest esteem, and, therefore, he struck the chords that would please the elegant rather than the earnest. "He was the poet-laureate of polite life."

Pope's influence upon the poetry of his own and the succeeding generation was pernicious. A throng of writers, in striving to imitate him, produced verse so thoroughly artificial that it was soulless and contemptible. The only thing about it to remind one of poetry was its form. They were satisfied with rhythm. They did not try to express thought. They forgot the spirit of poetry in their devotion to its mechanical properties. \*

John Gay (1688-1732) was one of those easy, amiable, good-natured men who are the darlings of their friends, and whose talents excite admiration without jealousy, while their characters are the object of fondness rather than respect. Pope describes him as

"Of manners gentle, of affections mild,  
In wit a man, simplicity a child."

He was apprenticed to a tradesman, but, believing that he held

\* The student is referred to the following interesting discussions of Pope and his poetry:

Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*,—De Quincey's *Biographical Essays*,—Reed's *Lectures on the British Poets*, Lect. IX.—Thackeray's *English Humorists*,—Taine's *English Literature*,—Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*.

the pen of a poet, he exchanged his calling for a thriftless literary career. He was eager for employment under the government, and succeeded in obtaining a position which he was unable to retain because of his indolent and self-indulgent habits. But he had the good fortune to secure the patronage of the Duchess of Monmouth, and in her household he lived, "lapped in cotton, and had his plate of chicken, and his saucer of cream, and frisked, and barked, and wheezed, and grew fat, and so ended." \* *The Shepherds' Week, in Six Pastorals*, written to ridicule the pastorals of Ambrose Phillips, was so full of humor and of rural description that it won popularity as a serious production. His next publication, *Trivia, or the Art of Walking in the Streets of London*, is interesting not only for its easy humor, but also for the curious details it gives of the scenery, costume and manners of the street at that time. Keen political allusions contributed to the popularity of Gay's dramatic pieces. His most successful venture in that line was *The Beggars' Opera*, the pioneer of English operatic works. His *Fables* (176), written in easy verse and abounding in good humor, still retain favor in collections of poetry for the young. His songs and ballads are among the most musical, touching, and playful found in our language.

**Matthew Prior** (1664-1721) was a poet and diplomatist of this time, who played a prominent part on the stage of politics as well as on that of literature (177). He took part with Charles Montagu in the composition of the *Country Mouse and City Mouse*, a poem intended to ridicule Dryden's *Hind and Panther*; and as the sentiments of the satire were approved by the government, the door of public employment was soon opened to him. After acting as Secretary of Legation at the Peace of Ryswick, he twice resided at Versailles in the capacity of envoy, and by his talents in negotiation, as well as by his wit and accomplishments in society, appears to have been very popular among the French. On returning to England he was made a Commissioner of Trade, and in 1701 became a member of the House of Commons. Though he had entered public life as a partisan of the Whigs, he deserted them for the Tories, on the occasion of the impeachment of Lord Somers. In 1715 he was ordered into custody by the Whigs, on a charge of high treason, and remained two years in confinement. But for his College Fel-

\* Thackeray.

lowship, which he prudently retained throughout the period of his prosperity, he would have been reduced to entire poverty. His longer and more ambitious poems are *Alma*, a metaphysical discussion carried on in Hudibrastic verse, exhibiting a good deal of thought and learning disguised under an easy conversational garb, and the religious epic entitled *Solomon*, a poem somewhat in the same manner, and with the same defects, as the  *Davideis*  of Cowley. The ballad, *Henry and Emma*, he founded on the ballad of *The Nutbrowne Maid*, but his work has not the charming simplicity of the old poem. His claim to poetic fame rests mainly upon his easy, animated love-songs.

Edward Young (1681-1765) began his career by the unsuccessful pursuit of fortune in the public service. He obtained his first literary fame by a satire entitled the *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion*, written before he abandoned a secular career. When nearly fifty years of age, he abandoned his hopes of political preferment, and, entering the service of the church, was made chaplain to George II., and afterwards was appointed to the living of Welwyn.

His place in the history of English literature is due to his striking and original poem, *The Night Thoughts* (180). This work, consisting of nine nights of meditations, is in blank verse, and is made up of reflections on Life, Death, Immortality,—the most solemn subjects that can engage the attention of the Christian and the philosopher. The general tone of the work is sombre and gloomy, perhaps in some degree affectedly so; for the author paraded the melancholy personal circumstances under which he wrote, overwhelmed by the rapidly succeeding deaths of many who were dear to him. Still the reader cannot rid himself of a suspicion that the grief and desolation were exaggerated for effect. There are other faults. No connection exists between the nine parts; the expression is unnatural; there is lack of simplicity. "Short, vivid, and broken gleams of genius" \* are frequently seen. The march of his verse is generally majestic, though it has little of the rolling, thunderous melody of Milton. The epigrammatic nature of some of his most striking images is best attested by the large number of expressions which have passed from his writings into the collo-

quial language of society, such as "procrastination is the thief of time," "all men think all men mortal but themselves."

The poetry of the Scottish Lowlands found an admirable representative at this time in **Allan Ramsay** (1686-1758), who was born in humble life, was first a wigmaker, and afterwards a bookseller in Edinburgh. He was of a happy, jovial, and contented humor, and rendered great services to the literature of his country by reviving the taste for the excellent old Scottish poets, and by editing and imitating the incomparable songs and ballads current among the people. He was also the author of an original pastoral poem, *The Gentle (or Noble) Shepherd*, which grew out of two eclogues he had written, descriptive of the rural life and scenery of Scotland. The complete work consists of a series of dialogues in verse, written in the melodious and picturesque dialect of the country, and woven into a simple but interesting love-story.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### PROSE WRITERS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

#### JOSEPH ADDISON.

"Give days and nights, sir, to the study of Addison, if you mean to be a good writer, or, what is more worth, an honest man."—*Samuel Johnson*.

"Addison was the best company in the world."—*Lady Mary Montagu*.

"He was not free with his superiors. He was rather mute in his society on some occasions; but when he began to be company he was full of vivacity, and went on in a noble stream of thought and language, so as to chain the attention of every one to him."—*Edward Young*.

"The great satirist who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it, who without inflicting a wound effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism."—*T. B. Macaulay*.

THE writers of prose who were contemporaneous with Pope, developed a new form of English literature, which has exerted a powerful and beneficial influence on the manners and culture of English readers. In the form of a periodical, a scanty supply of news was published, together with a short, lively essay on some moral or critical theme. The aim of the formal dissertations was to inculcate principles of virtue, good taste and politeness.

The most illustrious writer in this department of literature was **Joseph Addison** (1672–1719). This great writer and excellent man was the son of Lancelot Addison, a clergyman of some reputation for learning. In his early years he was sent to the Charter-house, a famous school in London, and there he began his friendship for "Dick"



Steele. At fifteen years of age he entered Queen's College, and two years later secured a scholarship at Magdalen College, where he distinguished himself by the style of his scholarship, and by his taste in Latin poetry.

His first attempt in English verse (1694) was an *Address to Dryden*, by which the old poet's friendship was won. A eulogistic poem on William III. attracted the attention of the Court, and gained for the young author a pension of three hundred pounds. He at once began travel in France and Italy, that he might cultivate his tastes; but he was soon deprived of his pension by the death of King William. He returned to London, where he lived in poverty, maintaining that dignified patience and quiet reserve which made his character so estimable. While Addison was living in obscurity, Marlborough won the memorable victory of Blenheim. The Lord Treasurer, Godolphin, eager to see the event celebrated in some worthy manner, was reminded of the young poet. The courtier sought for him, found him in his uncomfortable lodgings in Haymarket, and applied to him to sing the glory of the English hero. The poem known as *The Campaign* was the result. The verses are stiff and artificial enough; but Addison, abandoning the absurd custom of former poets, who paint a military hero as slaughtering whole squadrons with his single arm, places the glory of a great general on its true basis—the power of conceiving and executing profound intellectual combinations, and calmness and imperturbable foresight in the hour of danger. The praises of Marlborough were none too lofty for the popular demand; the town went wild over one passage, in which the hero was compared to an angel guiding a whirlwind.\*

\* "So when an angel by divine command,  
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land  
(Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed),  
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;  
And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,  
Rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm."

From the writing of that successful poem, the career of Addison was brilliant and prosperous. He was appointed Under-Secretary of State, and afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland. Besides these high posts he held other lucrative and honorable offices. The publication of the *Campaign* had been followed by that of his *Travels in Italy*, exhibiting proofs not only of his graceful scholarship, but also of his delicate humor, his benevolent morality, and his deep religious spirit. In 1707 he gave to the world his pleasing and graceful opera of *Rosamond*; and about this time he in all probability sketched the comedy of *The Drummer*.

Although Addison entered upon his literary career as a poet, he won his highest fame by writing prose for the first English periodicals.

A short account of Steele and of the early periodical literature may be appropriately given at this point. **Sir Richard Steele** (1675–1729) was of Irish parentage. He had been the schoolfellow of Addison, upon whom, both at the Charter-house and afterwards during a short stay at Oxford, he seems to have looked with veneration and love. His life was full of the wildest vicissitudes, and his character was one of those which it is equally impossible to hate or to respect. His heart was inordinately tender, his benevolence deep, his aspirations lofty; but his passions were strong, and his life was passed in sinning and repenting, in getting into scrapes and making projects of reformation. He utterly lacked prudence and self-control. Passionately fond of pleasure, and always ready to sacrifice his own interest for the whim of the moment, he caused himself to be disinherited by enlisting as a private in the Horse-Guards; and when afterwards promoted to a commission, he astonished the town by his wild extravagance, in the midst of which he wrote a moral and religious treatise entitled *The Christian Hero*, breathing in it the loftiest sentiments of piety and virtue.

He was a man of ready though not solid talents; and being an ardent partisan pamphleteer, was rewarded by Government with the place of Gazetteer. This position gave him a monopoly of official news at a time when newspapers were still in their infancy. He determined to profit by the facilities afforded him, and to found a new species of periodical which should contain the news of the day and a series of light and agreeable essays upon topics of universal interest, likely to improve the taste, the manners, and morals of society. It should be remarked that this was a period when literary taste was at its lowest ebb among the middle and fashionable classes of England. The amusements, when not merely frivolous, were either immoral or brutal. Gambling, even among women, was frightfully prevalent. The sports of the men were marked with cruelty and drunkenness. In such a state of things, intellectual pleasures and acquirements were regarded either with wonder or with contempt. The fops and fine ladies actually prided themselves on their ignorance of spelling, and any allusion to books was scouted as pedantry. Such was the disease which Steele desired to cure. He determined to treat it, not with formal doses of moral declamation, but with homœopathic quantities of good sense, good taste, and pleasing morality, disguised under an easy and fashionable style. *The Tatler* was a small sheet appearing three times a week, at the cost of 1*d.*, each number containing a short essay, generally extending to about two octavo pages, and the rest filled up with news and advertisements. The popularity of the new journal was instant and immense; no tea-table, no coffee-house—in that age of coffee-houses—was without it; and the authors, writing with ease, pleasantry, and knowledge of life,—writing as men of the world, and as men about town, rather than as literary recluses, soon gained the attention of the people whom they addressed. *The Tatler* was published for nearly two years,—from April 12th, 1709, till

January 2d, 1711. By that time Steele had lost his position as Gazetteer. His success in writing under the *nom de plume* of Isaac Bickerstaffe, prompted him to continue his addresses to the public. He soon established the famous *Spectator*. This was like the *Tatler*, with the difference that it appeared six times a week. After reaching five hundred and fifty-five numbers, it was discontinued for about eighteen months, resuming its work in 1714. *The Guardian*, inferior to either of the other periodicals, though having Addison and Steele for contributors, was begun in 1712, and continued for one hundred and seventy-five numbers. Steele, though he was master of a ready and pleasant pen, was compelled to obtain as much assistance as he could from his friends. Many writers of the time, among them Swift and Berkeley, furnished hints or contributions

But we must return to Addison. His constant and powerful aid was freely given to Steele. He entered warmly into the project, making the most valuable as well as the most numerous contributions. For *The Tatler* he furnished one-sixth, for *The Spectator* more than one-half, and for *The Guardian* one-third of the whole quantity of matter. His papers are signed by one of the four letters, C. L. I. O., either the letters of the name of Clio, or the initials of Chelsea, London, Islington and the Office, the places where the essays were written.

For several years four acts of an unfinished drama had been tossed about among Addison's papers. During the suspension of *The Spectator* he improved the opportunity of completing the work, and in 1713 brought out his tragedy of *Cato*. It is cold, solemn and pompous, written with scrupulous regard for the classical unities. The story is without special interest. The characters, however, are full of patriotic and virtuous rhetoric. The play was a wonderful success on the stage. Night after night an applauding audience crowded the theatre, whig and tory finding delight

in applying the political sentiments of the piece to the English politics of his own day; but after a few weeks the enthusiasm cooled, and the play was allowed to find its place in the library, and to exchange the unintelligent praises of the throng for the cool criticism of the private reader.

Addison won no distinction as a member of the House of Commons, or as a public officer. His inveterate timidity prevented him from speaking with effect. His powers of conversation are said to have deserted him when in the presence of more than two or three hearers. The one blemish in his life may be ascribed to this diffidence, for in order to conquer it, and to give flow and vivacity to his ideas, he had recourse to wine. We must remember, however, that excessive drinking was the fashion of that age in England, and was not regarded as a vice.

In 1716 Addison married the Countess Dowager of Warwick, to whose son he had been a tutor. The union does not seem to have added to the happiness of either the polished scholar or the dashing lady. He often would escape from the elegance of Holland House to spend his days and nights with old friends in the clubs and coffee-houses.

The year after his marriage, Addison reached the highest point of his political career; he was made Secretary of State, and in this eminent position exhibited the same liberality, modesty, and genuine public spirit, that had characterized his whole life. Even in his political journals, *The Freeholder* and *The Examiner*, he never departed from a tone of candor, moderation, and good breeding. He retained his secretaryship but a short time, retiring from it with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. It was his determination to devote the evening of his life to the composition of an elaborate work on the evidences of the Christian religion; but his remaining days were few; and the work was left incomplete. He died at the early age of forty-seven. A distressing asthma had afflicted his closing years and other

trials had attended him ; but his serene and gentle spirit lost none of its patience, nor did his reverential faith desert him.

Addison's celebrated quarrel with Pope was of too complicated a nature to be described here ; but however painful it may be to find the highest spirits of the age embittered against each other, we can hardly regret that quarrel ; for we owe to it one of the finest passages of Pope's works, the unequalled lines drawing the character of Atticus, which was unquestionably meant for Addison. Of all the accusations so brilliantly launched against him, Addison might plead guilty to none save the very venial one of loving to surround himself with an obsequious circle of literary admirers. The blacker portions of the portrait are traceable to the pure malignity of the sparkling satirist.

The fertility of invention displayed in his charming papers published in the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Guardian*, the variety of their subjects, and the singular felicity of their treatment, will ever place them among the masterpieces of fiction and of criticism. Their variety is wonderful. Nothing is too high, nothing too low, to furnish matter for amusing and yet profitable reflection. From the patches and cherry-colored ribbons of the ladies to the loftiest principles of morality and religion, everything is treated with appropriateness and unforced energy. He was long held up as the finest model of elegant yet idiomatic English prose ; and now the student will find in him qualities that never can become obsolete—an unfailing clearness and limpidity of expression, and a singular harmony between the language and the thought.\*

“Addison wrote his papers as gayly as if he were going out for a holiday. When Steele's *Tatler* first began his prattle, Addison, then in Ireland, caught at his friend's notion,

\* “Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.”—*Samuel Johnson*.

poured in paper after paper, and contributed the stores of his mind, the sweet fruits of his reading, the delightful gleanings of his daily observation, with a wonderful profusion, and, as it seemed, an almost endless fecundity. He was six and thirty years old; full and ripe. He had not worked crop after crop from his brain, manuring hastily, subsoiling indifferently, cutting and sowing and cutting again, like other luckless cultivators of letters. He had not done much as yet; a few Latin poems—graceful prolusions; a polite book of travels; a dissertation on medals, not very deep; four acts of a tragedy, a great classical exercise; and *The Campaign*, a large prize poem that won an enormous prize. But with his friend's discovery of the *Tatler*, Addison's calling was found, and the most delightful talker in the world began to speak. . . . His writings do not show insight into or reverence for the love of women, which I take to be, one the consequence of the other. He walks about the world watching their pretty humors, fashions, follies, flirtations, rivalries, and noting them with the most charming archness. He sees them in public, in the theatre, or at the assembly or the puppet-show; or at the toy-shop higgling for gloves and lace; or at the auction battling together over a blue porcelain dragon, or a darling monster in Japan; or at church, eyeing the width of their rivals' hoops, or the breadth of their laces, as they sweep down the aisles. Or he looks out of his window at the Garter in St. James's street, at Ardelia's coach as she blazes to the drawing-room with her coronet and six footmen; and remembering that her father was a Turkey merchant in the City, calculating how many sponges went to purchase her earring, and how many drums of figs to build her coach-box; or he demurely watches behind a tree in Spring Garden as Saccharissa (whom he knows under her mask) trips out of her chair to the alley where Sir Fopling is waiting. He sees only the public life of women. Addison was one of

the most resolute clubmen of his day. He passed many hours daily in those haunts. Besides drinking, he indulged in that odious practice of smoking. Poor fellow; he was a man's man, remember. The only woman he did know he did not write about. I take it there would not have been much humor in that story."\*

But his delineations of the characters of men are wonderfully delicate. The inimitable personage of Sir Roger de Coverley is a perfectly finished picture, worthy of Cervantes or of Walter Scott. The manner in which the foibles and the virtues of the old squire are combined is a proof that Addison, who added most of the subtle strokes to the character, possessed humor in its highest and most delicate perfection. And the inimitable sketches of the squire's dependants, the chaplain, the butler, and Will Wimble, the poor relative,—all these delicate observations of character must ever place Addison high among the great painters of human nature. His poetry, though very popular in his own time, has since fallen in public estimation to a point very far below that occupied by his prose. His earlier and more ambitious poems, even including the once-lauded *Campaign*, have little to distinguish them from the vast mass of regular, frigid, irreproachable composition popular in that time. His lighter lyrical poetry, such as the songs in *Rosamond*, are pleasing and musical. His *Hymns* breathe a fervent and tender spirit of piety, and are in their diction and versification stamped with great beauty and refinement. This is especially true of the verses beginning,

“When all thy mercies, O my God,”

and of the well-known adaptation of the noble psalm, “The Heavens declare the Glory of God.”

“When this man looks from the world whose weaknesses he describes so benevolently, up to the Heaven which shines



over us all, I can hardly fancy a human face lighted up with a more serene rapture; a human intellect thrilling with a purer love and adoration than Joseph Addison's. Listen to him: from your childhood you have known the verses; but who can hear their sacred music without love and awe?

“Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth;  
And all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.  
What though in solemn silence all  
Move round this dark terrestrial ball;  
What though no real voice nor sound,  
Among their radiant orbs be found;  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is divine.”

“It seems to me those verses shine like the stars. They shine out of a great, deep calm. When he turns to Heaven, a Sabbath comes over that man's mind; and his face lights up from it with a glory of thanks and prayer. His sense of religion stirs through his whole being.” \*

\* Thackeray. †

† For further readings on Addison, the student is referred to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Macaulay's *Essay*, Thackeray's *English Humorists*.

*Comm.*  
JONATHAN SWIFT.

"The most unhappy man on earth."—*Bishop King.*

"The most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age."—*Joseph Addison.*

"He moves laughter but never joins in it. He appears in his works such as he appears in society. All the company are convulsed with merriment, while the Dean, the author of all the mirth, preserves an invincible gravity and even sourness of aspect, and gives utterance to the most eccentric and ludicrous fancies, with the air of a man reading the commination service."—*T. B. Macaulay.*

"Swift was in person tall, strong and well made, of a dark complexion, but with blue eyes, black and bushy eyebrows, nose somewhat aquiline, and features which well expressed the stern, haughty, and dauntless turn of his mind. He was never known to laugh, and his smiles are happily characterized by the well known lines of Shakespeare,—indeed, the whole description of Cassius might be applied to Swift:—

'He reads much :

He is a great observer, and he looks

Quite through the deeds of men: . . . .

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort,

As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit

That could be mov'd to smile at anything.' "

—*Walter Scott.*

"In humor and in irony, and in the talent of debasing and defiling what he hated, we join with the world in thinking the Dean of St. Patrick without a rival."—*Francis Jeffrey.*

"Dean Swift may be placed at the head of those that have employed a plain style. Few writers have discovered more capacity. He treats every subject which he handles, whether serious or ludicrous, in a masterly manner. He knew, almost beyond any man, the purity, the extent, the precision of the English language."—*Hugh Blair.*

**Jonathan Swift** (1667–1745), a most original genius, a most striking character, holds an eminent place in the literary and political history of his time. He was born in Dublin; but his parents were English. His father died in poverty before Swift was born, and so the child became dependent upon the charity of relatives. His uncle sent him to school at Kilkenny, and then to Trinity College, Dublin. There Swift busied himself with irregular and desultory study, and at last received his degree with the unfavorable notice that it was conferred "*speciali gratia*," indicating that

his conduct had not satisfied the academical authorities. In 1688 he entered the household of Sir William Temple, a distant connection of his family, in whose service he remained as secretary for six years. There he ate the bread of bitterness. His social position, midway between that of a member of the family and a servant, was galling to his proud spirit. His residence at Moor Park continued down to Temple's death in 1699, with, however, one interruption in 1694, when he entered the Irish church establishment, having obtained the small preferment of Kilroot. This temporary absence was caused by a quarrel with his patron, whose supercilious condescension Swift's haughty spirit could not brook. But the Irish parsonage gave him more misery than he had found in Temple's palace, and he soon returned to humble himself before the baronet. During his residence at Moor Park he was industriously employed in study. Steady and extensive reading corrected the defects of his earlier education. On Temple's death he became the literary executor of his patron, and prepared numerous works for the press. These he presented to William III. with a preface and dedication written by himself.

Failing to obtain any preferment from that sovereign, Swift went to Ireland in 1699 as chaplain to Earl Berkeley, the Viceroy, and received the small livings of Laracor and Rathbeggan. At Laracor he lived till 1710, amusing himself with gardening, and repairing his church and parsonage. He made yearly visits to England, where he became the familiar companion of Halifax, Godolphin, Somers, and Addison, the most illustrious men of the time. His connection with William III. and Temple, as well as the predominance of Whig policy, naturally caused Swift to enter public life under the Whig banner. It was in the interests of this party that he wrote his first work, the *Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, a political pamphlet in favor of the Whig ministers who were impeached in 1701.

But his first important works were *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, published in 1704. The former is a savage and yet exquisitely humorous pasquinade, ridiculing the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians, and exalting the High Anglican party, the three churches being impersonated in the ludicrous and not very decorous adventures of his three heroes, Peter, Jack, and Martin.\* *The Battle of the Books*, though first published in 1704, appears to have been written as early as 1697, to support his patron, Sir William Temple, in the celebrated Boyle and Bentley controversy on the letters of Phalaris. This dispute arose out of the violently-contested question of the relative superiority of the Ancients and the Moderns, a question started in England by Sir William Temple in 1692.† Swift became a champion of

\* The purpose of this work was to counteract the political schemes of the followers of Hobbes. The *Tale* is that three brothers, Peter (the Roman Catholic Church), Martin (the Lutherans), and Jack (the Calvinists) received coats from their dying father. The coats were to last them as long as they lived, provided they kept them clean. But as fashions changed the coats changed with them. Embroidery, fringes and tinsel conceal the simple garments bequeathed by the father. Peter hides the will and assumes lordly dignities. Martin and Jack steal copies of the will, and leave Peter's house. Martin tries to remove some of the trappings from his coat and to leave some; but Jack, in his earnestness, ripped off all the embroidery and tore away much of the coat.

Hallam regards this as Swift's masterpiece. It was published anonymously; and that is not strange, for the book contains passages to which no clergyman could becomingly put his name.

† The dispute had its origin in France, where Fontenelle and Perrault claimed for the moderns a general superiority over the writers of antiquity. A reply to their arguments was published by Sir William Temple in 1692, in his *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*, written in elegant language, but containing much puerile matter, and exhibiting great credulity. Not content with pointing out the undoubted merits of the great writers of antiquity, he undervalued the labors and discoveries of the moderns, and passed over Shakespeare, Milton, and Newton without even mentioning their names. Among other arguments for the decay of humor, wit, and learning, Temple maintained "that the oldest books extant were still the best in their kind;" and in proof of this assertion cited the *Fables of Æsop* and the *Epistles of Phalaris*. This led to the publication of a new edition of the *Epistles of Phalaris* by the scholars of Christ-Church, Oxford (1695). The nominal editor was Charles Boyle, who, in his Preface, inserted a bitter reflection upon RICHARD BENTLEY (1662-1742), the King's Librarian, on account of the refusal of the latter to grant the loan of a MS. in the King's Library. Bentley soon had an opportunity for retaliation. He proved that the author of the *Epistles of Phalaris* was not the Sicilian tyrant, but some sophist of a later age. Sir William Temple was incensed at

the Boyle faction, and in this work gave a striking foretaste of those tremendous powers of sarcasm and vituperation which made him the most formidable pamphleteer that ever lived. The merits of the case he does not attempt to touch; but with the wildest and most grotesque invention, and with unscrupulous use of everything coarse and ludicrous in language, he strives to cover his opponents with contempt.

In 1708 Swift was employed to negotiate with the English government in reference to the claims of the Irish clergy. He visited England on this mission, and, though unsuccessful, displayed great activity and shrewdness. He had by this time rendered himself a prominent person both in his profession and in politics, he was known and feared as a powerful and unscrupulous pamphleteer, and was the familiar associate of those who were at the head of affairs.

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Bentley's Dissertation; and Swift, who then resided in Temple's house, made his first attack upon Bentley in the *Battle of the Books*, in which he ridiculed the great scholar in the most ludicrous manner. Bentley's attack was considered an affront to Christ-Church College; and her scholars resolved to crush, at once and forever, the audacious assailant. The chief task of the reply was undertaken by Atterbury, but he was assisted by all the scholars of the college. "In point of classical learning," observes the biographer of Bentley, "the joint-stock of the confederacy bore no proportion to that of Bentley; their acquaintance with several of the books upon which they comment appears only to have begun upon that occasion, and sometimes they are indebted for their knowledge of them to their adversary; compared with his boundless erudition, their learning was that of school-boys, and not always sufficient to preserve them from distressing mistakes. But their deficiency in learning they made up by wit and railery; and when the book appeared, in 1698, it was received with extravagant applause. It was entitled *Dr. Bentley's Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris and the Fables of Æsop, examined by the Honorable Charles Boyle, Esq.* It is usually known by the familiar title of *Boyle against Bentley*; though Boyle, whose name it bears, had no share in the composition of the work. It was generally supposed that Bentley was silenced and crushed. Conscious of his own learning, he could afford to despise the ignorant malice of his enemies; and he set himself resolutely to work to prepare an answer, which should not only silence his opponents, but establish his reputation as one of the greatest scholars that ever lived. His work appeared in 1699, under the title of *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris; with an Answer to the Objections of the Hon. Robert Boyle, by Richard Bentley, D. D.*; but it is frequently called *Bentley against Boyle*." The appearance of this work is to be considered an epoch not only in the life of Bentley, but in the history of literature. With this dissertation the controversy came to an end, for Bentley's reply was so complete and crushing that it was hopeless to attempt a rejoinder.

His advocacy of Whig principles, never very hearty, came to an end in 1710. He had long regarded Ireland with contempt and detestation, and was eager for a promotion that would enable him to reside in England, near the focus of literary and political activity. But his hopes of preferment were not fulfilled, and, when his little patience was exhausted, he abandoned his party, and began to intrigue and to satirize on the side of the Tories. In this same year, Harley and Pope's friend, St. John, reached the head of affairs. Swift was received by them with open arms. He was caressed and flattered by the great, the fair, the witty, and the wise. With unexampled rapidity he poured forth squib after squib and pamphlet after pamphlet, employing all the stores of his unequalled fancy and powerful sophistry to defend his party and to blacken and ridicule his antagonists. The great object of his ambition was an English bishopric, and the ministers would have been willing enough to gratify him; but his authorship of the *Tale of a Tub*, and a lampoon of his on the Duchess of Somerset, proved fatal to him, and he was obliged to content himself with the Deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin. He entered upon the duties of this office in 1713. This was the most active period of Swift's life. His *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, his *Conduct of the Allies*, and his *Reflections on the Barrier Treaty*, the ablest political pamphlets ever written, not only reconciled the nation to the peace policy of the Tory ministry, but also kindled a feeling of enthusiasm for the Tory statesmen among the people. Evil days, however, were at hand. Harley and St. John tore asunder their party with their dissensions, and, in spite of all Swift's efforts, the troubles became desperate. St. John succeeded in turning out Harley. But his triumph was short. The death of Anne and the accession of the Elector of Hanover, recalled the Whigs to power. The ministry were accused of a plot for bringing back the Pretender; Harley was committed to

the Tower; St. John fled beyond the sea; and Swift retired to Ireland, where he was received with contempt and execration.

During his frequent visits to London, Swift's company had always been sought after by men of letters as well as by statesmen. With Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot, he formed what was called the Scriblerus Club, a company united by the closest intimacy, where each threw the ideas published in their famous *Miscellanies* into a common stock.

For twelve years Swift remained in Ireland. He was quiet, but thoroughly discontented. At last, in 1724, the opportunity came for him to speak his hatred for the English government, and he spoke in such a way as to raise himself from being an object of detestation to a height of popularity such as no other English churchman ever attained in Ireland.

The condition of Ireland was just then unusually deplorable; the manufacturing industry and the commerce of the country were paralyzed by the protective statutes of the English Parliament; the agricultural classes were reduced to the lowest abyss of degradation. Swift boldly proclaimed the misery of the country. His force and bitterness soon drew down the persecution of the Ministers. But the highest point of his Irish popularity was attained by the seven famous *Drapier Letters*. These letters, signed *M. B. Drapier*, were written by Swift and inserted in a Dublin newspaper. The occasion was the attempt, on the part of the English ministry, to force the circulation of a large sum of copper money in Ireland. The contract for coining this money had been undertaken by William Wood, a Birmingham speculator. Swift endeavored to persuade the people that it was far below its nominal value; and he counselled all true patriots not only to refuse to take it, but to refrain from using any English manufactures whatever. The force of his arguments, and the skill with which he wore the mask

of a plain, honest tradesman, excited the populace almost to frenzy. Swift was known to be the real author of the letters, and his defence of the rights of the Irish people made him from that moment the idol of that warm-hearted race.

Two years later he visited England for the purpose  
**1726]** of publishing his famous *Gulliver's Travels.* The work was received with delight and admiration, and was at once recognized as his greatest gift to literature. But applause could not soothe the griefs that were about to befall him. The death of Stella, one of the few beings whom he ever really loved, happened in 1728; and the loss of many friends further contributed to darken and intensify the gloom of his proud and sombre spirit. He had from an early period suffered occasionally from giddiness, and after Stella's death the attacks were more frequent and more severe. Deafness deprived him of the pleasure of conversation. Forebodings of insanity tormented him until they were cruelly verified.\* In 1741 he passed into a state of idiocy that lasted without interruption till his death in 1745. He is buried in his own cathedral of St. Patrick; and over his grave is inscribed that terrible epitaph composed by himself, in which he speaks of resting "*ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit.*"<sup>†</sup> But the most impressive monument of this sad life is the hospital for idiots and incurable madmen, built and endowed in accordance with the directions of Swift's will.

An account of Swift's career would be imperfect without some mention of the two unhappy women whose love for him was the glory and the misery of their lives. While residing in Temple's family, he became acquainted with Esther Johnson, a beautiful young girl, brought up as a

\* "I remember as I and others were taking with Swift an evening walk, about a mile out of Dublin, he stopped short; we passed on; but perceiving he did not follow us I went back and found him fixed as a statue, and earnestly gazing upwards at a noble tree, which, in its upper branches, was much withered and decayed. Pointing at it, he said, 'I shall be like that tree; I shall die at the top.'"—*Dr. Young.*



dependant in the house, to whom, while hardly in her teens, Swift gave instruction. The acquaintance ripened into the deepest and tenderest passion. On his removal to Ireland, Swift induced Stella—such was the poetical name he gave her—to settle with her friend Mrs. Dingley in that country, where he maintained with both of them that long, curious, and intimate correspondence which has since been published as his *Journal to Stella*. There is little doubt that Swift intended to marry Stella, and that Stella's life was filled with the hope that she would be his wife. During one of his visits to London, Swift became intimate with the family of a rich merchant named Vanhomrigh, whose daughter Hester, to whom he gave the name of Vanessa, he unwittingly inspired with a deep and intense love for him. On the death of her father, Miss Vanhomrigh, possessing an independent fortune, retired to a villa in Ireland. There Swift continued his visits without clearing up to either of the unhappy ladies the nature of his relations to the other. At last Vanessa, driven almost to madness by suspense and irritation, wrote to Stella to inquire into the nature of Swift's relations to her. Stella gave the letter to Swift. In rage he carried it to Vanessa, and without a word, but with a terrible countenance, threw it down before her. The poor girl died soon after. Swift at this time was probably the husband of Stella. It is believed that they were privately married in the garden of the deanery, in 1716. He, however, never recognized her in public as his wife, nor did he ever live in the same house with her, nor did he allow her to meet him unless a third person were present. In reading his words when he was bereaved by her death, one must see that his love for her was intense.

A few comments on his writings must close this essay. The greatest and most characteristic of his prose works is the *Voyages of Gulliver* (175), a vast and all-embracing satire upon humanity itself. The general plan of this book

is as follows: a plain, unaffected, honest ship-surgeon, describes the strange scenes and adventures through which he passes with an air of simple, straightforward, prosaic good faith, such as Defoe displays in (*Robinson Crusoe*.) The contrast between the extravagance of the inventions and the gravity with which they are related, formed precisely the point of the peculiar humor of Swift, and was the distinguishing feature of his singular, saturnine pleasantry. He is said never to have been known to laugh; but to have poured forth the quaintest and most fantastic inventions with an air of gravity and sternness that kept his audience in convulsions of merriment. This admirable fiction consists of four parts or voyages: in the first Gulliver visits the country of Lilliput, whose inhabitants are about six inches in stature, and where all the objects, houses, trees, ships, and animals, are in exact proportion to the miniature human beings. The invention displayed in the droll and surprising incidents is unbounded; the air with which they are recounted is natural, and the strange scenes and adventures are recorded with an appearance of simple straightforward honesty altogether inimitable. The second voyage is to Brobdingnag, a country of enormous giants, sixty feet in height; and here Gulliver plays the same part that the pigmy Lilliputians had played to him. As in the first voyage, the contemptible and ludicrous side of human things is shown, by exhibiting how trifling they would appear in almost microscopic proportions, so in Brobdingnag we are made to perceive how odious and ridiculous our politics, our wars, and our ambitions would appear to the gigantic perceptions of a more mighty race. The third part carries Gulliver to a series of strange and fantastic countries. The first is Laputa, a flying island, inhabited by philosophers and astronomers; whence he passes to the Academy of Lagado; thence to Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg. In this part the author introduces the terrific description of the Struldbrugs,

wretches who are cursed with bodily immortality without intellects or affections.

Gulliver's last voyage is to the country of the Houyhnhnms, a region where horses are the reasoning beings; and men, under the name of Yahoos, are degraded to the rank of noxious, filthy and unreasoning brutes. The satire goes on deepening as it advances; playful in the scenes of Lilliput, it grows more and more bitter at every step, till in the Yahoos it reaches a pitch of almost insane ferocity.

Swift wrote pamphlets of a partly religious character, such as his *Sentiments of a Church of England Man*, *The Sacramental Test*, and many others on local and temporary subjects. They all exhibit the vigor of his reasoning, the force of his style, and the fierceness of his invective. Neither respect for his own dignity nor respect for the candor of others ever restrained him from overwhelming his opponents with ridicule or abuse. The pleasantest and most innocent of his writings are the papers written in the character of Isaac Bickerstaff (174), where he shows up with exquisite drollery, the quackery of the astrologer Part-ridge. His letters are very numerous; and those addressed to his intimate friends, Pope and Gay, and those written to Sheridan, half-friend and half-butt, contain inimitable specimens of his peculiar humor.

Swift will ever be regarded as one of the greatest masters of English prose, and his poetical works also will give him a prominent place among the writers of his age. Yet they have no pretension to loftiness of language; they studiously preserve the familiar expression of common life. In nearly all of them he adopted the short octo-syllable verse that Prior and Gay had rendered popular. The poems, like his prose, show wonderful acquaintance with ordinary incidents, intense observation of human nature, and a profoundly misanthropic view of mankind. The most likely to remain popular are the *Verses on my own Death*, describing the

mode in which that event, and Swift's own character, would be discussed among his friends, his enemies, and his acquaintances; and there is no composition in the world which gives a more easy and animated picture, at once satirical and true, of the language and sentiments of ordinary society. But his fame rests wholly upon his wonderful prose. Vigor and perspicuity mark every page. There is no sign of pedantry in his style; every sentence is homely and rugged and strong. "He seems to have hated foreign words as he hated men." His vocabulary is thoroughly Saxon, and the variety of English idioms used in expressing his thought is greater than can be found in any other writer of his age.\*

No member of the brilliant society of which Pope and Swift were the chief luminaries, deserves more respect than **Dr. John Arbuthnot** (1667-1735). He was of Scottish origin, and enjoyed high reputation as a physician attached to the Court from 1709 till the death of Queen Anne. He was one of the most learned wits of the day, and was the chief contributor to the *Miscellanies* spoken of in our discussion of Pope. He is supposed to have conceived the plan of that extensive satire on the abuses of learning, embodied in the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, and to have executed the best portions of that work. It is impossible, however, to distinguish between the different contributions of the club. But the fame of Arbuthnot is more intimately connected with the *History of John Bull*, in which the intrigues and Wars of the Succession are caricatured with much drollery. The object of the work was to render the prosecution of the war by Marlborough unpopular with the nation. The adventures of Squire South (Austria), Lewis Baboon (France), Nic. Frog (Holland), and Lord Strutt (the King of Spain), are related with fun, odd humor, and familiar vulgarity of language. Arbuthnot is always good-natured. He shows no trace of that fierce misanthropy which tinged every page of Swift. The characters of the various nations and parties are conceived and maintained

\* For further readings on this topic see *The North American Review*, Jan. 1868, —Cralk's *English Literature*, vol. II., p. 208, seq., —Macaulay's *Essay on Sir William Temple*, —Thackeray's *English Humorists*, —Jeffrey in the *British Essayists*, —Scott's *Life of Swift*, —Hazlitt's *Lectures on The English Poets*, Lect. VI.

with spirit. The popular ideal of John Bull, with which Englishmen are so fond of identifying their personal and national peculiarities, was first stamped and fixed by Arbuthnot's amusing burlesque.

**Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke** (1678–1751), remarkable for his extraordinary career as a statesman and orator, was a prominent member of the brilliant coterie of Pope and Swift. After a stormy public life, he amused his declining years by the composition of political, moral, and philosophical essays. While an exile he wrote his *Reflections on Exile*, his *Letter to Sir William Windham* in defence of his political life, his papers *On the Study of History*, and *On the True Use of Retirement*. After his death a complete edition of his works was published in five volumes. His disbelief in the divine origin of Christianity is distinctly stated. The language of Bolingbroke is lofty and oratorical; but the thought is often feeble, and the tone of philosophical indifference to matters in which other men are interested seems to be affected. It was to Bolingbroke that Pope addressed *The Essay on Man*, and from him the poet derived many of his loose opinions.

**George Berkeley** (1684–1753) was ever full of projects for increasing the virtue and happiness of his fellow-creatures. When fifty years of age he was made Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland. This position he continued to hold, obstinately refusing any promotion that would remove him from the people for whom he loved to work. His writings are numerous, embracing a wide field of moral and metaphysical discussion (191). He is one of the most brilliant, as well as one of the earliest advocates of the ideal theory; and therefore appears in contrast with Locke in the history of English philosophy. Locke traced ideas to external nature, teaching that the phenomena observed are the measure of ideas. Berkeley taught that the *ideas* themselves are the only things man can pronounce *real*. His first philosophical work was his *Theory of Vision*, in which he announces an important discovery concerning knowledge of the properties of bodies. This was followed by *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, and by the *Three Dialogues*. What he aimed to do in his writings, was to refute the scepticism

found in other philosophical works; but in the interpretation of much of his thought he is treated as though he were himself a reckless teacher of error.

Although Pope and many distinguished men of letters in this period assiduously cultivated epistolary composition, none of them could equal **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu** (1690–1762) in brilliant letter-writing. She was the daughter of the Duke of Kingston, and was celebrated, even from her childhood, for the vivacity of her intellect, her precocious mental acquirements, and the beauty and graces of her person. Her education had been far more extensive and solid than was then usually given to women. Her acquaintance with history, and even with Latin, was considerable, and her studies had been in some degree directed by Bishop Burnet. In 1712 she married Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, and accompanied him on his embassy to the court of Constantinople. She described her travels over Europe and the East in those delightful *Letters* which have given her in English literature a place resembling that of Madame de Sévigné in the literature of France (192). Admirable common sense, observation, vivacity, extensive reading without a trace of pedantry, and a pleasant tinge of half-playful sarcasm, are qualities of her correspondence. The style displays the simplicity and natural elegance of the high-born and high-bred lady combined with the ease of the thorough woman of the world. The moral tone, indeed, is not high, for the career of Lady Mary had not been such as to cherish a very scrupulous delicacy. But she had seen so much, and had been brought into contact with so many remarkable persons, and in a way that gave her such means of judging of them, that she is always sensible and amusing. The successful introduction of inoculation for the small-pox is mainly to be attributed to her intelligence and courage. She not only had the courage to try the experiment upon her own child, but with admirable constancy she resisted the furious opposition of bigotry and ignorance against the bold innovation. She was at one time the intimate friend of Pope, and the object of his most ardent adulation; but a violent quarrel occurred between them, and the spiteful poet pursued her for a time with an almost furious hatred. She is the Sappho of his satirical works.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FIRST GREAT NOVELISTS.

PROSE FICTION was one of the latest departments of literature cultivated by English authors. It is true that Sydney's *Arcadia* was a chivalric form of this kind of writing, and Bacon's *Atlantis* and More's *Utopia*, written in Latin, were philosophical romances; but the use of prose narrative in the delineation of passions, characters, and incidents of real life was first developed by a constellation of great writers in the eighteenth century, among whom the names of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, are the most brilliant.

The literature of fiction divides itself into two great branches—romances and novels. In the romance the characters and incidents are of a lofty, historical, or supernatural character; in the novel there is a recital of the events of ordinary life. “The two differ from each other in the element of truth. The typical novel has this complete. It adheres to the line of characters it has chosen to delineate, with thorough and exact representation, striving to make them clearly drawn counterparts of those real persons whom they represent. The romance lacks truth, and that in the worst of all ways, by insensible departures, by excessive coloring, by glaring and false lights. . . . It is against the romance element, ever likely to appear in historical novels, as it appears in history itself, when it runs like a child after the glittering march and the sonorous sounds of war, that most of the moral objections to works of fiction hold.”\* In the department of the novel, from its first appearance in our literature down to the present time, English writers have encountered few rivals and no superiors.

\* Bascom's *Philosophy of English Literature*, p. 271.

**Daniel Defoe** (1661-1731) was the founder of the English novel. He was the son of a London butcher named Foe, and not liking the family name he attached a prefix to suit his taste. He was educated for the ministry in a dissenting sect, but chose a mercantile life, at various times carrying on the business of a hosier, a tile-maker, and a woolen draper. His interest in politics led him to take up the pen as a pamphleteer, and his radical Protestantism carried him to such extremes that he was frequently subjected to punishment. In spite of the pillory, of fines and of imprisonment, he fearlessly continued to publish pamphlet after pamphlet, full of irony, logic, and patriotism. In *The Trueborn Englishman*, a poem written in singularly tuneless rhymes, he defended William of Orange and the Dutch against the prejudices of his countrymen; in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* he gravely proposed as the easiest and speediest way of ridding the land of them, to hang their ministers and banish the people; and when the House of Commons pronounced the pamphlet a libel on the nation, and sentenced him to stand in the pillory, he coolly wrote his *Ode to the Pillory*, describing it as

"A hieroglyphic state-machine  
Condemned to punish fancy in."

During one of his imprisonments he commenced *The Review*, the prototype of our semi-political, semi-literary periodicals, publishing it three times a week.

In 1719 the first part of (*Robinson Crusoe*) appeared. Its 1719] success among the humble readers whom Defoe generally addressed was instantaneous. The simplicity and probability of the events narrated, and the author's skill in identifying himself with the character of his recluse, gave the book an intense interest. The impression it leaves on the memory of every reader is deep and permanent. The hero is without pretensions to extraordinary knowledge or intelligence, and is therefore such a person as every one, ignorant or cultivated, old or young, can sympathize with. The more thoughtful the reader, the more does he appreciate Defoe's wonderful art in throwing the air of reality over every part of his fiction. Scott remarks that the author has shown his skill in this work, by studiously pitching it in a low key, both as regards its style and its incidents.

Among Defoe's other works of fiction, *The Memoirs of a Cavalier*



deserves special mention. The work professes to have been written by one who had taken part in the great Civil War; and so successfully was the pretence carried out, that it deceived even the great Chatham into citing the volume as an authentic narrative. In *A Journal of the Great Plague in London* (193), he shows the same marvelous faculty for representing fiction as truth. The imaginary annalist, a respectable London shopkeeper, describes the terrible sights and incidents of that fearful time with a vividness that is appalling. *The Adventures of Colonel Jack*, *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana*, and *Captain Singleton*, show the same power of feigning reality. His *True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal* was one of the boldest experiments ever made upon human credulity, and yet so plausibly was the story told that searching enquiries were made concerning the facts alleged. His only object in telling the story was to secure the sale of a dull and unsaleable book; and his purpose was accomplished, for the whole edition of *Drelincourt on Death* quit the bookseller's shelves in consequence of its recommendation by the visitor from another world.

Defoe's success in fiction attracted the attention of other writers. The field was inviting; for the stage was not in favor, the periodical essays were written out, and the popular demand for literary entertainment was increasing. To supply the demand a company of story-tellers put themselves at work.

**Samuel Richardson** (1689-1761) was the pioneer in that branch of fiction which grows out of the incidents of private and commonplace affairs. His life presents little matter for comment; its main features belong to the ordinary career of a prudent and successful tradesman. He was born in Derbyshire,—the son of a poor carpenter. At fifteen years of age he went to London to become a printer's apprentice. The diligence with which he pursued his calling secured him rapid advancement; he was taken into partnership with his master, and ultimately became the head of an extensive business. At fifty years of age, he stumbled into a path leading him to literary fame. Letter-writing, in those days, was regarded as an important branch of composition,—a means of literary culture. Richardson had been known from his youth as a fluent letter-writer; and a London firm wishing to publish a series of model letters as an epistolary manual to the

lower classes, applied to him as the suitable person to prepare them. After he had accepted the commission, he conceived the happy idea of making the letters tell a connected story. The result of his undertaking was his first novel, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*. 1741] The heroine is represented as a poor, beautiful, and innocent country girl, who enters the service of a rich gentleman. Most of the letters, in which the master's wickedness and the maid's virtue are narrated, are written by Pamela herself. Her minute descriptions of her situation and surroundings, her trials and heart-conflicts, and the various events of her anxious life, seem tedious to the modern reader. But they possess an air of reality, and often introduce exquisite touches of nature and pathos. The sensation made among readers of the old school of chivalric fable by this "romance of real life" was unparalleled. It captivated public fancy as *Hudibras* had done a century before. Fashionable circles made it the theme of their enthusiasm; grave moralists praised its fidelity to nature, and popular preachers applauded the high tone of its morality. Five editions were exhausted in a single year. Richardson suddenly found himself famous; but his was not a mind to be unsettled by success. He continued to exercise laudable and prosaic industry in his business. He was first Printer of the House of Commons; in 1754 he became Master of the Stationers' Company, and in 1760 he bought a half-share in the lucrative office of Printer to the King. In the intervals of business, however, writing in the parlor of his back shop, he assiduously labored to develop his new-found resources. *Clarissa Harlowe*, published in 1749, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, in 1753, gave fresh evidence of his literary talent, and attained a popularity equal to that of their predecessor. Richardson's pleasure in his own fame was somewhat alloyed by his oversensitive temperament. He could not endure with complacency the free and sometimes caustic criticism passed upon his work. For some years before his death he withdrew himself from general society, and passed most of his time in his suburban home at Parson's Green, London. There he was the adored centre of a little group of admiring women. His published correspondence and literary remains, give a curious picture of the enervating and twaddling flattery which soothed his timidity and nourished his self-satisfaction.

*Clarissa Harlowe* is Richardson's greatest work. Whether we consider the interest of the story, the variety and truth of the characters, or the intense pathos of the catastrophe, we must not only accord it a decisive superiority over his other productions, but must give it also one of the foremost places in the catalogue of prose fiction. It is the tragic story of a young lady who falls a victim to the treachery and profligacy of a man of splendid talent and attractions, but of complete and almost diabolical corruption. Although Richardson is far more successful in the delineation of women than of men, yet *Lovelace* is one of the most perfect and finished portraits that literature has to show. In this, as in Richardson's other novels, the interest is generated by the accumulation of a thousand delicate, almost imperceptible touches, and the characters are elaborated with painful minuteness. It requires an effort to yield the attention to the gentle, equable current of incident and emotion; yet after a time its force is found to be irresistible.

Richardson never relinquished the idea of incorporating a moral into his writings. In his three successive works he essayed to portray three different orders in the social scale. *Pamela* dealt with the lower, *Clarissa Harlowe* with the middle class of society. In *Sir Charles Grandison* he intended to represent an ideal hero who should combine the graces and accomplishments of the man of fashion with the perfection of mental and religious culture.

While Richardson was enjoying the praise of his first volume, **Henry Fielding** (1707-1754) set himself to work to ridicule *Pamela* and to rival the modest printer. In character the two men had little in common. Fielding was a gay, rollicking fellow, who laughed at virtue and hated all pretensions to dignity. He had inherited a broken-down estate and extravagant habits from his father. At twenty years of age he found himself dependent upon his own resources, and at once betook himself to the stage, composing many inferior comedies, and writing busily for the journals of the day. His career for some years was a continuous struggle with fortune. He married an excellent lady, and squandered her property; he speculated in the Haymarket Theatre, and failed utterly; he then tried the law, and was called to the bar, but there too he was unsuccessful. He also took an active part in political controversy, and in numerous pamphlets and articles maintained liberal

principles. It was not until the year 1742 that he struck out that vein of humorous writing in which he never had, nor is ever likely to have, a rival. His first novel, *Joseph Andrews*, was a powerful caricature of the timid and fastidious morality, the sentimentalism and the somewhat preaching style of *Pamela*. It at once received the honor due to a great original creation. In rapid succession he produced his *Journey from this World to the Next*, full of political allusions that have now lost their piquancy, and his truly remarkable satirical tale *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*. In 1749 he was appointed a police magistrate. While holding this office he composed the finest, completest, and profoundest 1749] of his works, the incomparable *Tom Jones*. (191), a story whose dramatic scenes and characters must have been drawn from the exhibitions of real life in his court.

*Amelia*, his third great novel, closes the list. Ruined in health by labor and excesses, he sailed for Lisbon in 1754, seeking benefit from a genial climate; but before the close of that year he was buried in the strange land.

Fielding was an accurate observer of character. With the vast and motley field of English society, so strongly marked at that time, he was minutely acquainted, and his spirit delighted in the reproduction of its oddities and eccentricities. He is intensely English. Hogarth himself is not more so. In the construction of his plots, Fielding was masterly. That of *Tom Jones* is perhaps the finest example to be met with in fiction of a series of events probable, yet surprising, each leading to the ultimate catastrophe. He combined an almost childish delight in fun and extravagantly ludicrous incident, with a philosophic analysis of character. Sometimes he masks impressive moral reflections under a pleasant air of satire and irony. There is a freshness in his writing not found in Richardson; there is also boisterousness, coarseness of thought, and an evident delight in dealing with the nature of the depraved.

The most attractive character in *Joseph Andrews* is Parson Adams, one of the richest, most humorous, and truly genial conceptions of this great artist. Adams's learning, simplicity, and courage, together with his innumerable and always consistent oddities, make him a character as humorous as Sancho Panza himself. In the adventures of *Jonathan Wild the Great*, the exploits of a consummate scoundrel are related in a tone of ironical admira-

tion; and the story contains some powerful, and many humorous scenes.

In *Tom Jones* (194) it is difficult to know what most to admire—the artful conduct of the plot, the immense variety, truth, and humor of the personages, the gayety of the incidents, or the many acute remarks. Tom Jones himself and the fair Sophy, though elaborated by the author with peculiar care, as types of all that he thought attractive, are tinged with much coarseness and vulgarity; but the time when Fielding wrote was remarkable for the low tone of manners and sentiment.

The interest of *Amelia* is entirely domestic. The story was intended to portray Fielding's own follies and irregularities, and to pay a tribute to the virtues and love of his wife. The errors and repentance of Captain Booth, and the inexhaustible love and indulgence of the heroine, are strongly contrasted. Fielding had little power over the pathetic emotions; there are, however, in this novel several touching episodes and strokes of character exhibiting that peculiar characteristic of truly humorous conceptions, namely, the power of touching the heart while exciting the sense of the ludicrous.

Nearly contemporary with Fielding's novels, were the first efforts of another distinguished worker in the same field,—Tobias George Smollett (1721–1771) (195). Smollett was of Scotch parentage. His family, though poor, gave him a university education. He undertook to support himself by the profession of medicine; but his attention was diverted from his studies by an uncontrollable desire for literary fame, and his life was almost as chequered and distressed as that of Defoe. At the age of nineteen he went to London, hoping to secure a publisher for a tragedy entitled *The Regicide*. Failing in this, he embarked in an expedition to Carthage in the humble office of surgeon's mate. This gave him an opportunity of studying those grotesque features of sea-life which he afterwards reproduced in his fictions. Quitting the service after he had reached the West Indies, he resided there until he returned to London in 1744. For several years he divided his time between the practice of medicine and the pursuits of literature. He had produced several satires and poems of trifling merit before 1748; in that year *Roderick Random* opened his career as a novelist. Three years later

it was followed by *Peregrine Pickle*, and in 1753 *The Adventures of Ferdinand, (Count Fathom,)* a counterpart to Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, appeared. Previous to this Smollett had become discouraged with his small success as a physician, and had resolved to concentrate his energies in the efforts of his pen. He became active in political controversy; and although the vigor of his style and the patriotic ardor of his convictions made his writings effective, his rashness and vehemence of personal feeling often brought him into collision with the law. Assuming the management of *The Critical Review*, he used the columns to reveal his knowledge of naval abuses. A fierce attack upon the commander of the expedition to Carthage subjected him to a suit for libel. He was heavily fined and was imprisoned for several months. He continued to edit the *Review*, however, and exercised his literary censorship so vigorously as to provoke the abuse of a host of angry politicians, authors, and doctors. The activity of his pen was indefatigable; he produced in rapid succession a translation of *Don Quixote*, a fourth novel entitled *Sir Lancelot Greaves*, and a *History of England*, in which he displayed his partisan prejudices. The experiences of two years spent in foreign travel were narrated, in a *Tour in France and Italy*. His last political work was a satirical attack upon Lord Bute, entitled *The Adventures of an Atom*. At fifty years of age his health was completely broken down by agitation and incessant labor, and he was ordered to try the effect of a more genial climate. He resided a short time at Leghorn, and there, in spite of exhaustion and suffering, his genius gave forth its most pleasing flash of comic humor. This was the novel of *Humphrey Clinker*, the most genial and truly humorous of his works. Like Fielding, Smollett died and was buried in a foreign land. The two most intensely national of the great group of English character-painters were doomed to lay their bones, nearly at the same time, under the soil of the stranger.

The plots of Smollett's novels are not unfolded with the slow and exquisitely logical coherence of Richardson, nor are the incidents combined and grouped with that masterly knowledge of effect which distinguishes Fielding. Each of his novels is a series of scenes—striking, grotesque, farcical, pathetic—with no bond of union save their common connection with two or three chief actors. Yet the lively succession of persons and events is a

constant stimulus to the attention; what is coarse and repulsive in description is life-like; while freshness and earnestness offset an occasional tendency to florid expression and sentimental exaggeration. Smollett's characters are numerous and sketched with great animation, but they are not analyzed with a profound knowledge of passion and motive. Having seized some prominent feature, or having placed some oddity of mind or person in a strong light, he ceased to care for development and consistency. Many of his most laughable scenes depend for their effect upon physical humor,—blows and kicks and extravagant terrors; but, unlike Fielding, he fails to make such episodes throw light upon interesting traits of human nature. With the laugh they have excited, Smollett's use of them is at an end. He "excels most as the lively caricaturist; Fielding as the exact painter and profound metaphysician."

Of Smollett's novels *Roderick Random* is in some respects the most vigorous. It is full of transcripts from the author's personal experience; the hero's miseries at school, his apprenticeship to the apothecary, his sufferings on board ship, bear every mark of pictures from life. The same may be said of his inimitable and exquisitely varied sailor-characters. As a rule his heroes have but little to attract the reader's sympathy, being generally hard, impudent, and selfish adventurers; but in the subordinate persons, and especially in those of whimsical but faithful dependants, he shows a greater warmth of sentiment. *Humphrey Clinker*, though running over with fun and grotesque incident, exhibits a riper and mellower tone of character-painting than is to be found in his preceding works. This novel contains much that is merely descriptive; it purports to be the travelling-journal of the droll and original party whose letters make up the work. The modern reader may gather many interesting details of life in the eighteenth century from Smollett's picturing of the various localities in England and Scotland which were visited in the imaginary tour.

We have already referred to Smollett's work as a political writer. He also possessed considerable poetical talent. His best effort in this department is entitled the *Tears of Scotland*. It expresses the patriotic indignation of a generous mind, horror-struck by the cruelties perpetrated by the English troops after the battle of Culloden.

The character of **Laurence Sterne** (1713–1768) was as eccentric as his works. He was born in Ireland, but received his education at the University of Cambridge. He entered the church, and through the influence of his relatives enjoyed considerable preferment. To the living of Sutton he added a prebend's stall in the Cathedral of York, and he was ultimately advanced to the rich living of Coxwold. His private life was little in harmony with his profession; he appears to have been fanciful, vain, and self-indulgent, perpetually at war with his brother churchmen, and to have been masking caprice and selfishness in his domestic relations under a pretence of extreme sensibility. In 1761 he published the first two volumes of a novel entitled *Tristram Shandy* (196). The freshness and oddity of his style captivated popular taste, and two more volumes which appeared in the following year, instantly attained the height of public favor. Sterne became the lion of fashionable society in London. For a time he indulged his morbid appetite for flattery and his propensity to sentimental intrigue in the brilliant circles of the capital. He then went upon the Continent; and during his travels through France and Italy accumulated the materials for his charming *Sentimental Journey*. This was his best and last production; he took up his residence in London for the purpose of superintending its publication, and died in desolate lodgings, in the fifty-fifth year of his age.

Sterne's works consist of the novel of *Tristram Shandy*, of the *Sentimental Journey*, and of a collection of *Sermons*, written in the odd and fantastic style which he brought into temporary vogue. *Tristram Shandy*, though nominally a romance in the biographical form, is intentionally irregular and capricious. The hero makes no appearance on the scene of action, and the story consists of a series of episodes which introduce the reader to the home-life of an English country family. This family is one of the most amusing collections of odd individualities that ever genius has delineated. The mythical Tristram and Yorick, a humorous clergyman in whom Sterne has idealized his own character, alternately carry on the narrative; and other prominent personages are Walter Shandy, a retired merchant, the father of Tristram, his wife, his brother, Toby Shandy, a veteran officer, and his servant, Corporal Trim. These are all conceived and executed in the finest and most Shakespearean spirit of humor and tenderness; and they are supported by a crowd of



minor, yet hardly less individual portraitures. Mr. Shandy, the restless crotchety philosopher, is drawn with consummate skill, and is admirably contrasted with the simple benevolence and professional enthusiasm of the unequalled Uncle Toby, a creation of the order of Sancho Panza and Parson Adams. Acute observation of the minor traits of human nature seems to have been Sterne's strongest quality. He portrays his characters not by description, but by allusion, and fascinates the reader by incidental and unexpected revelation of their amiable eccentricities. He also shows himself a master in combining the humorous and the pathetic. Both his humor and his pathos are often truly admirable; although the one sometimes degenerates into indecent buffoonery, and the other into sickly sentimentality. The *Sentimental Journey* was intended by its author to form a sequel to *Tristram Shandy*. It has glaring faults, both in taste and in morality; yet it abounds in charming descriptions and passages of quaint pathos. Much may be forgiven the author, in consideration of the candor and appreciation of his tone in treating of foreigners and foreign institutions. Such a tone was equally rare and laudable, at a time when Englishmen regarded all other nations with the most bigoted prejudice and hostility.

In Sterne's writings there is a parade of obscure and quaint erudition. This tends to give an original flavor to his style, and at the time of his writing, when the elder authors were but little studied, it passed for an indication of extensive learning; but he is now known to have been the boldest of plagiarists, pillaging without scruple the pages of Burton, Rabelais, and the old lawyers and canonists.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### // HISTORICAL WRITERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. 31

[N accordance with a law which seems at particular epochs to govern the appearance of great names in one department of art or literature, like the sculptors of the Periclean age, the romantic dramatists in that of Elizabeth, and the novelists who appeared in England in the days of Richardson and Fielding, the middle of the eighteenth century was signalized by a remarkable wealth of historical genius, and gave birth to Hume, Robertson and Gibbon.

**David Hume** (1711-1776), a Scotchman, was educated at the University of Edinburgh. A taste for literature and literary pursuits early declared itself as his ruling passion, but the limited circumstances of his family seemed to make its gratification impossible. However, after a vain attempt to devote himself to the Law, and an equally unsuccessful trial of commercial life, Hume resolved "to make a very rigid frugality supply his deficiency of fortune, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of his talents in literature." At the age of twenty-three he went to France with the intention of pursuing his studies in a country retreat. Three years passed very agreeably in close attention to philosophy and general literature. In 1737 he returned to Great Britain to publish the first-fruits of his pen, *A Treatise on Human Nature*. "Never," says Hume's autobiography, "was literary attempt more unfortunate. But being naturally of a cheerful and sanguine temper, I very soon recovered the blow." Two volumes of *Moral and Philosophical Essays*, published in 1742, met with a more favorable reception; but the wavering fortunes of the next ten years would have chilled the aspirations of a less resolute soul. True to his resolve, Hume eked out his slender patrimony with genuine Scotch thrift; it was, however, hardly sufficient for his

support, and as yet his receipts from the booksellers were very small. By acting for one year as tutor to an insane nobleman, and for two more as aid-de-camp of a military embassy, he obtained what seemed to his modest desires a competence. He then, in 1752, became Librarian of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh. This position brought him no salary, but placed at his command a large and excellent collection of books. With the aid thus furnished he began his great work, the *History of England from the Accession of the Stuarts to the Revolution of 1688* (203). To this he afterwards added the earlier history, from the invasion of Julius Cæsar to the reign of James I. The first two volumes were received with the same neglect which had blighted his former publications; and indifference became general odium when the work was found to be an embodiment of high Tory principles. However, the great merits of the plan and the excellence of the style, revealed more and more with each successive volume, gradually overcame prejudices.

1762] Before the time of its completion, the History had attained a great and universal reputation. One edition after another was rapidly bought up; and common consent named Hume the first of English historians. He now received a call to public service, and attended Lord Hertford on his embassy to Paris. Although he had neither the personal graces nor the conversational talents requisite for shining in the brilliant society of the capital, his literary reputation secured him abundant homage. His autobiography speaks with evident complacency of the "excessive civilities" he received from "men and women of all ranks and stations." After his return to Scotland, he for two years discharged the duties of Under-Secretary of State. The emoluments of his public offices, added to his income from the publishers, had by this time raised him to comparative affluence. He retired to his native city of Edinburgh, and passed the last years of his life in the tranquil enjoyment of his literary fame, and in the affection of his personal friends.

As a metaphysical writer Hume deserves a distinguished place in the history of philosophy (204). He was a skeptic of the most logical and uncompromising type.

The *History of England* is a book of very high value. In a certain exquisite ease and vivacity of narration it has certainly never been surpassed; and in the analysis of character and the

appreciation of great events, Hume's singular clearness and philosophic view give him a right to one of the foremost places among modern historians. But its defects are no less considerable. Hume's indolence induced him to remain contented with taking his facts from preceding writers, without troubling himself about accuracy, so that he must be read with distrust whenever he discusses questions that should have required patient research.

Naming them in the order of their birth, the second in this group of historians is **William Robertson** (1721-1793) (205), the son of a Scotch clergyman. At twenty-two years of age he entered his father's profession, and began his public work in a quiet rural parish. There he remained for fifteen years, faithfully performing the duties of his office, acquiring skill as a writer in the composition of his sermons, gaining reputation as a scholarly thinker, and devoting all the time he could spare to the study of history. In 1758 he was promoted to the charge of an important church in Edinburgh, and in the following year he introduced himself to the literary world by the publication of *A History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and James the Sixth* (205). Three years later he was appointed Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and Royal Historiographer of Scotland. Ten years after the publication of his *History of Scotland*, his greatest work, *The History of the Emperor Charles the Fifth of Germany*, was ready for the press. Eight years more were spent in preparing his *History of America*.

Like Hume he is distinguished by the eloquence of his narrative, by the picturesque delineation of characters and events, and by the purity and dignity of his style. In all of his works there is richness and melody of expression, and a strong power of vivid and pathetic description; but there is a lack of accuracy in research. Recent investigations made by Prescott and by English writers have dispelled some of the romance of Robertson. "The fault of this great historian was one common to the writers of his time. Filled with an exaggerated idea of the dignity of history, he trembles at the thought of descending to so mean a thing as daily life. The Emperor moves before us in all his grandeur, the rich velvet of his train sweeping in stately waves upon the marble that he treads. We know many of the laws he made, the wars he waged, the great public assemblies and pageants of which he was the brilliant central

figure; but we know little of the man who dwelt within the gorgeous wrappings. . . . Of the many-hued life the people lived, we hear next to nothing."\* But in spite of his defects, Robertson's name will always hold an honorable place among the historians of England.

**Edward Gibbon** (1737–1794) was the greatest historical writer of this group. He was born at Putney, near London, and was the grandson of a merchant of large fortune. As his health was delicate, his early education was neglected; but he acquired an insatiable appetite for reading, especially for historical literature. When he had been at the University of Oxford a little more than a year, he embraced the Roman Catholic faith. For this act he was taken from the University and was sent to Lausanne, where he was placed under the care of an eminent Swiss theologian. He subsequently re-entered the Protestant Church; but it is probable that this change of faith was only a matter of form about which he was merely indifferent. In Switzerland he commenced that course of systematic study which gradually filled his mind with stores of sacred and profane learning; and there too he acquired a strong sympathy with French modes of thought. Indeed, the first-fruits of his pen actually appeared in French, an essay on the *Study of Literature*. Between 1763 and 1765 he travelled over France, Switzerland, and Italy. His own words must be used in describing an incident which occurred in 1764. "As I sat musing amidst the ruin of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, the idea of writing the *Decline and Fall* of the city first started to my mind."†

Returning to England in 1765 he passed several years in comparative leisure, before setting himself strenuously at work on the composition of his history. The first volume appeared in 1776, receiving the applause of the learned, and the favor of the masses of readers. Meanwhile Gibbon had taken a seat in Parliament and was interested in the political questions of the day. His support was given to Lord North throughout the period of our Revolutionary War. In 1781 the second and third volumes of his history were published. He then retired from the service of the government, sought his old retreat at Lausanne, and

\* Collier.

† *Memoirs*, p. 193

for four years devoted himself to the completion of his work. He thus describes the hour and the scene when the task was ended : "It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion ; and that, whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." He died in London in 1794.

*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (206-209) is one of the greatest monuments of human industry and skill. It begins with the reign of Trajan, A. D. 98, and closes with the fall of the Eastern Empire in 1452. These thirteen and a half centuries include not only the slow decline of the Roman Empire, but also the irruption of the barbarians, the establishment of the Byzantine power, the re-organization of the European nations, the foundation of the religious and political system of Mohammedanism, and the Crusades. The materials for much of the structure had to be patiently gathered from the rubbish of the Byzantine annalists, and from the wild stories of the eastern chroniclers. To create light and order out of this chaos, the historian had to make himself familiar with the whole range of philosophy, religion, science, jurisprudence and war, as they contribute to the civilization of the nations and ages described by him. And when all this work was done, he had to set it forth in an attractive manner. For the influences exerted by the literature and civilizations of Greece and Rome, he had a masterly appreciation ; but he is not mindful of the important part acted by the Teutonic races in contributing to the results of modern history, and is boldly sceptical concerning the power and purity of Christianity. He has been regarded as one of the most dangerous enemies by whom the Christian faith has been assailed. Valiant men have taken up weapons against him, and, in some instances, have

been betrayed by their zeal into an unfair warfare upon him. The accusation of having intentionally distorted facts, or of garbling authorities, he has refuted in the *Vindication* in which he replied to his opponents; and the deliberate opinion of Guizot, whom no one can accuse of indifference to religion, will be conclusive as to Gibbon's merit on this point.

His style is elaborate and sonorous. There is a stately tread in his sentences. They lack simplicity; they abound in epigram and antithesis, and have a displeasing preponderance of the Latin over the Saxon element in their diction. He describes scenery and manners with the accuracy and vividness of an eye-witness. His chief fault is found in the fact that his imagination was sensuous, and led him to dwell upon material grandeur with a fonder enthusiasm than he could feel for moral elevation.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ETHICAL, POLITICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL WRITERS OF THE LATTER HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

#### SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"A mass of genuine manhood."—*Thomas Carlyle*.

"Johnson, to be sure, has a rough manner; but no man alive has a better heart. He has nothing of the bear but the skin."—*Oliver Goldsmith*.

"Rabelais and all other wits are nothing compared to him. You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug and squeezes laughter out of you, whether you will or no."—*David Garrick*.

"He was distinguished by vigorous understanding and inflexible integrity. His imagination was not more lively than was necessary to illustrate his maxims; his attainments in science were inconsiderable, and in learning far from the first-class; they chiefly consisted in that sort of knowledge which a powerful mind collects from miscellaneous reading and various intercourse with mankind."—*Sir James Mackintosh*.

"If it be asked, who first, in England, at this period, breasted the waves and stemmed the tide of infidelity,—who, enlisting wit and eloquence, together with argument and learning on the side of revealed religion, first turned the literary current in its favor, and mainly prepared the reaction which succeeded—that praise seems most justly to belong to Dr. Samuel Johnson."—*Lord Mahon: History of England*.

"The club-room is before us, and the table on which stands the omelet for Nugent, and the lemons for Johnson. There are assembled those heads which live forever on the canvas of Reynolds. There are the spectacles of Burke and the tall thin form of Langton, the courtly sneer of Beauclerc and the beaming smile of Garrick; Gibbon, tapping his snuff-box, and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is that strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up, the gigantic body, the huge massy face seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the gray wig with the scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches; we see the heavy form rolling, we hear it puffing; and then comes the 'Why, sir!' and the 'What then, sir?' and the 'No, sir!' and the 'You don't see your way through the question, sir!'"—*T. B. Macaulay*.

WHILE the novelists and historians whose works we have been considering were busy with their pens,



other writers of prose were making valuable contributions to letters in the department of ethics, politics, and theology. The central figure of the literary men of the period is **Samuel Johnson** (1709–1784). He was the son of a poor bookseller in Lichfield. From his childhood he had to struggle against disease, and melancholy, and an indolent disposition. In 1728 he was sent to Oxford. There he remained three years, until his dying father had become unable to help him. Leaving the University without his degree, he attempted to support himself by teaching; but he was unsuccessful, and turned his attention to literary work. He was already married to a lady old enough to be his mother. Without fortune and without friends he settled in London in 1737, beginning his thirty years' struggle with labor and want.\* The profession he had chosen was then at its lowest ebb, and he was compelled to do its humblest work. He was a bookseller's hack, a mere literary drudge. Poverty attended him. Once, in a note to his employer, he subscribed himself, "Yours, *impransus*, S. Johnson." He wrote for various publications, and particularly for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, furnishing criticism, prefaces and translations. In 1738 he made a good name among the booksellers by the sale of his *London* (215), an admirable paraphrase of the third satire of Juvenal. In 1744 he published *A Life of Savage*, that unhappy poet whose career was so extraordinary, and whose vices were not less striking than his talents. Johnson had known him well, and they had often wandered supperless and homeless about the streets at midnight. Indeed, no literary life was ever a more correct exemplification than his own of the truth of his majestic line:

"Slow rises worth by poverty depressed."

\* David Garrick, a young man who had been one of his pupils, accompanied Johnson to London, intending to study law at Lincoln's Inn; but the stage attracted him away from the bar, and he soon began his famous career as an actor.

From 1747 to 1755 Johnson was engaged in the preparation of his most famous work, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (211). He had promised to complete it in three years; but the labor was arduous, and seven years were spent in getting its pages ready for the printer. As there was no such work in English literature, it supplied a want that had been long felt. Its success was great, and its compiler was applauded far and wide. Many imperfections may be found in it, especially in its etymologies, for Johnson shared the general English ignorance of the Teutonic languages from which two-thirds of the words of our language are derived. But in the accuracy of its definitions and in the quotations adduced to exemplify the different meanings of words, it could not have been surpassed.

While at work upon his dictionary he diverted his mind by the publication of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (216), an imitation of the tenth satire of Juvenal; and at the same time he brought out upon the stage his tragedy of *Irene*, a work begun in his earlier years. Johnson founded, and carried on alone, two periodical papers in the style that Addison and Steele had rendered so popular. These were the *Rambler*, (212) and the *Idler*; the former was published from 1750 until 1752, and the latter from 1758 until 1760. The ease, grace, pleasantry, and variety which gave such charm to the *Tatler* and *Spectator* are totally incompatible with the heavy, antithetical, ponderous manner of Johnson; and his good sense, piety, and sombre tone of morality are but a poor substitute for the knowledge of the world displayed in his models. This species of periodical essay-writing, which exerted so powerful an influence on taste and manners in the eighteenth century, may be said to terminate with the *Idler*, though continued with gradually decreasing originality by other writers.

Johnson's mother died in 1759, and he was without the

funds needed to pay the expenses of her funeral. To raise this money he spent the nights of one week in the composition of his once-famous moral tale, *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. The manners and scenery of this story are neither those of an oriental nor of any other country, and the book is but a series of dialogues and reflections, embodying the author's ideas on a great variety of subjects connected with art, literature, society, philosophy, and religion.

It was not until 1762, when he was fifty-three years of age, that he escaped from the poverty against which he had long and valiantly struggled. At the accession of George III. the government hoped to gain popularity by showing favor to art and letters. Johnson was recognized as holding a high position among literary workers, and was selected as one who should enjoy the royal bounty. A pension of three hundred pounds placed him above want, and enabled him to indulge his constitutional indolence. His good-fortune was shared with the poor. A blind old woman, a peevish old man, and other helpless people found a home in his dwelling, and in him a patient friend.

Johnson's earlier life, with its poverty, its affliction, its toil, is not distinctly pictured by his biographer. Its mingled romance and misery keep us from intimate acquaintance with him before the day of his good-fortune, but from that time he is known as no other man of the past is; \* for the year after the pension was decreed to him, he became

\* Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fullness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him,—his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rollug walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal-pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge and the negro Frank,—all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood.”—*T. B. Macaulay*.

acquainted with a young Scotchman, **James Boswell, Esq.**, a vain, tattling, frivolous busybody, whose only claim to respect is that he produced the best biography that had been written in English,—and that was *Boswell's Life of Johnson*. From the beginning of the acquaintance Boswell revered the sage, listened to him as though his sentences were sacredly inspired, and treasured up every word that he could, as it came from the lips of his saint. Every night he wrote in his note-book the wise sayings of the philosopher, adding notes to the last detail of dialogue and of action, until, at last, his notes gave him the material with which to produce his famous book. He has given not only the most lively and vivid portrait of the person, manners, and conversation of Johnson, but also the most admirable picture of the society amid which he played so brilliant a part. Among the celebrated social meetings of that age of clubs was the society founded by Johnson, in which his friends Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Bishop Percy, Goldsmith, Bennet Langton, Beauclerc, and others, were prominent figures. Johnson's powers of conversation were extraordinary, and were famously used in that company. He delighted in discussion, and, by constant practice, had acquired the art of expressing himself with pointed force and elegance. His ponderous expression formed an appropriate vehicle for his weighty thoughts, his apt illustrations, and his immense stores of reading and observation. This was perhaps the most brilliant and the happiest portion of his life. He made the acquaintance of the family of a rich brewer named Thrale, a member of the House of Commons, whose wife was famous for her talents and for the intellectual society she gathered around her. Under their roof Johnson enjoyed all that friendship, respect, and great wealth could give. This acquaintance lasted sixteen years, and gave him the opportunity of frequenting refined society. In the company of the Thrales he made several

excursions to different parts of England, and once to Paris. His edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1765. It cannot be said to have added to his reputation. With the exception of an occasional happy remark, and a sensible selection from the commentaries of preceding annotators, it is quite unworthy of him. In 1773 Johnson, in company with his friend Boswell, made a journey to the Hebrides (214), which enabled him to become acquainted with Scotland and the Scotch, and thus to dissipate many of his odd prejudices against the country and the people. The volume giving an account of his impressions contains many interesting passages.\*

The *Lives of the Poets* (213), published in 1781, was his last important work. Johnson had undertaken the task of preparing very brief biographical sketches, and a critical preface for a new edition of the English poets. His information was so abundant that the work grew into a volume abounding in passages of the happiest and most original criticism. But no reader should form his opinion of these poets from Johnson. His applause is given to the writers of the artificial school; Cowley, Waller, and Pope filled his vision. Others he could not understand. His criticisms on Milton, Gray, Thomson, Akenside were denounced at the time as monstrous examples of injustice. In uttering his disapproval of Johnson's treatment of Milton even the patient Cowper said, "I could thrash his old jacket till I made the pension jingle in his pocket."

On the 13th of December, 1784, this good man and emi-

\* The *Journey to the Hebrides* was a work re-written from private letters addressed to Mrs. Thrale. A comparison between the original letters and the version expressed in pompous language, such as Johnson considered essential to the dignity of literature, shows many amusing transformations. The following instance furnishes an illustration. "When we were taken up stairs," he says in one of the letters, "a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which one of us was to lie." In the *Journey*, the same incident is thus described,—"Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose, started up, at our entrance, a man black as a Cyclops from the forge."

nent writer died, and a week afterwards he was buried in Westminster Abbey. For two years he had been **1784]** suffering from dropsy and asthma, and had been haunted by his old melancholy.

Johnson's style was so peculiar that it has received the distinguishing name of "Johnsonese." There is in it none of Addison's colloquial elegance, none of Swift's idiomatic terseness. Short words had no charm for him. Sonorous Latin derivatives, and carefully elaborated sentences, were marshalled in honor of his thoughts. Whether describing a scene in a tavern, or expatiating on the grandest of moral themes, the same majestic display of language makes his writing monotonous. This was generally thought to be the sign of his genius by the men of letters who bowed before him; though Goldsmith once boldly declared to his face, "If you were to write a fable about little fishes, Doctor, you would make the little fishes talk like whales." / "In fact, his phraseology rolls away in solemn and majestic periods, in which every substantive marches ceremoniously, accompanied by its epithet; great, pompous words peal like an organ; every proposition is set forth balanced by a proposition of equal length; thought is developed with the compassed regularity and official splendor of a procession. . . .  
 . . . An oratorical age would recognize him as a master, and attribute to him in eloquence the primacy which it attributed to Pope in verse." \* †

Johnson's character shows a blending of prejudice and liberality, of scepticism and credulity, of bigotry and candor. He was an heroic struggler with misfortune. He was one of the invincibles. Throughout his life he was an independent, resolute man; in boyhood he threw away the shoes which pity had sent to him, in manhood he

\* Taine.†

† Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield (210) is in striking contrast with his general style.

threw away the tardy courtesies of Chesterfield. Among frivolous men, he was serious; among scoffers, he was reverent; among insincere men, he was sincere; among selfish men, he was generous. Of him Carlyle says, "As for Johnson, I have always considered him to be by nature, one of the great English souls." In common breeding he was utterly wanting; his dress, his motion, his voice, his face, his eating,—all were offensive. We think of him as a most ill-mannered man. The blending of greatness and meanness puzzles us until we remind ourselves that his severe schooling in poverty developed the noble and the boorish traits together. When weary and lame he reached the top of the ladder by which he had climbed from poverty and obscurity to competence and fame, he had brought with him the begrimed and offensive manners of his underground life. He was thoroughly a man of letters. (No better specimen of the type appears in the eighteenth century.)

Consult Carlyle's *Essays*. Walpole's *Men of the Reign of George III.* Albert Barnes's *Miscellaneous Essays*. Hazlitt *On the Periodical Essayists*. Macaulay's *Essay on Samuel Johnson*. Macaulay's *Essay on Croker's Edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson*, and *Boswell's Life of Johnson*.

**Edmund Burke** (1730–1797) was a man of such powerful and versatile genius that he has been likened to Bacon. He stands foremost among English political writers and orators. The fervor and imagery of oratory are found in his philosophical discussions, and the highest qualities of the statesman and the man of letters appear in all of his pages. He had a becoming enthusiasm for whatever object attracted his sympathies, and into the service of this enthusiasm he impressed all the disciplined forces of his learning, his logic, and his historical and political knowledge. He was the son of an Irish attorney, and spent many of his early days near the ruins of Spenser's famous castle of Kilcolman. Early in life he went to England to study law, but his tastes soon led him into literary work, and he became a regular writer for the magazines. His first reputation was gained by *The Vindication of Natural Society*, an ironical imitation of the style and sentiments of

Lord Bolingbroke. In pursuing Bolingbroke's course of reasoning he reached the conclusion, that as wickedness has prevailed under every form of government, society itself is evil, and therefore, that only the savage state is conducive to virtue and happiness. The work was published anonymously; but so perfect was it as an imitation of the style and sentiment of Bolingbroke that the most eminent critics of the day, among them Samuel Johnson, did not detect its intense and delicate irony, and pronounced it a genuine posthumous work of the earlier philosopher and statesman.

A few months afterwards Burke published *An Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful* (218), which has since been regarded as one of the classics in our literature. This work gained him a high place in the public esteem, and introduced him into the most brilliant literary circles.

He began his political career as secretary to the Chief Secretary of Ireland. The position was not pleasing to him. He soon received an appointment from the Marquis of Rockingham, the Prime Minister, and at once began his long public life of honor and activity. He sat in the House of Commons, and was one of the most prominent debaters during the agitated periods of the American and the French Revolutions. The Reign of Terror in France transformed Burke from a constitutional Whig into a Tory, but at the same time animated his genius to some of its noblest bursts of eloquence. His *Reflections on the French Revolution* (220) was written with the most anxious care, and with the most masterly skill. In going through the press its proofs were patiently criticised eleven times before he was satisfied to publish the work. When it appeared its success amply repaid his labor, for it was read far and wide, and was most influential throughout Europe in checking the dangerous tendencies of that age. His *Letter to a Noble Lord* (222), provoked by an ungenerous assault, deservedly ranks high among the products of his pen. The culminating point of his political life was the part he played in the trial of Warren Hastings (221). In that majestic and solemn scene, where a great nation sat in judgment upon a great man, Burke played the most prominent part. He was among the managers of the impeachment, and acting in the name of the House of Commons he pronounced one of the sublimest philippics that ancient or modern oratory can show. //



From 1769, with occasional interruptions down to 1772, there appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, one of the leading London journals, a series of brilliantly sarcastic letters, for the most part signed JUNIUS (223). Their attack was directed against the great public men of the day. They exhibited so much weight and dignity of style, and so minute an acquaintance with the details of party tactics, and breathed such a lofty tone of constitutional principle, combined with such bitterness, and even ferocity of personal invective, that their influence was unbounded. The annals of political controversy show nothing so fierce and terrible as these invectives. They will ever be regarded as master-pieces in their particular style. Who Junius was still remains a mystery. Burke, Hamilton, Francis, Lyttleton, and Lord George Sackville have been fixed upon successively as their writer. The preponderance of evidence points towards Sir Philip Francis.

**Adam Smith** (1723-1790) was the founder, in England, of the science of Political Economy. He was a Scotchman, a Professor of Logic and of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. His most important work is the *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (224). This discussion was the result of ten years of study and investigation. Upon the fact that the only natural process by which a nation can acquire wealth is by labor, he laid the foundation for modern economic science. His clear and logical reasoning, and his abundant and popular illustration attracted much attention to his teachings, and exerted a beneficial influence on legislation and commerce. His moral and metaphysical theories are now forgotten, but his *Wealth of Nations* still presents the general principles of political economy in their most attractive form.

What Adam Smith did for the students of Political Economy, **Sir William Blackstone** (1723-1780) did for the students of the Constitution and Laws of England. He was a lawyer who mingled a strong taste for elegant literature with the graver studies of his profession. His (*Commentaries on the Laws of England*) was the first systematic work which gave the elementary and historical knowledge requisite for the study. The book is written in an easy and pleasant style, with a masterly analysis, and still is the best outline of the history and the principles of the subject he discusses

The most prominent names in the English theological literature of the eighteenth century are those of **Bishop Butler** (1692–1752) and **William Paley** (1743–1805). The former is more remarkable for the severe and coherent logic with which he demonstrates his conclusions; the latter for his consummate skill in popularizing the abstruser arguments of his predecessor. Butler's principal work is *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (181). In it he examines the resemblance between the existence and attributes of God as proved by arguments drawn from the works of nature, and shows that existence, and those attributes to be in no way incompatible with the notions conveyed to us by revelation.

Paley's books are numerous, and all excellent; the principal of them are *Elements of Moral and Political Philosophy*, the *Horæ Paulinæ* (225), the *Evidences of Christianity*, and the production of his old age, the *Treatise on Natural Theology*. It will be seen from the titles of these works, over what an extent of moral and theological philosophy Paley's mind had travelled. For clearness, animation, and easy grace, his style has rarely been equalled.

Among the crowd of less noticeable writers whose names might be mentioned in this chapter, but few produced works that still have peculiar value. **Lord Lyttleton** published *A History of Henry II.* which is noteworthy as being the most elaborate work yet written on one of the most momentous reigns in English history. *The Elements of Criticism* by **Henry Home**, **Lord Kames**, and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* by **George Campbell**, in spite of many publications on the same subjects since their time, continue to be standard authorities in their respective departments.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DAWN OF ROMANTIC POETRY.

THE mechanical perfection of the poetry of Pope and his school was so generally applauded that every common versifier imitated its tricks of melody and its neat antitheses. But a thoroughly artificial spirit cannot satisfy the demands of poetry. Even while Pope swayed the sceptre, there were indications of a disposition to seek for themes in a wider sphere. Fancy was yearning for exercise in the fields of nature, and for the excitement of emotions. In **Matthew Greene's** poem *The Spleen*, in *The Minstrel* of **James Beattie**, and in *The Grave*, by **Robert Blair**, this tendency is perceptible, and may be ascribed to a weariness coming from repetitions of far-off echoes of Pope.

**James Thomson** (1700-1748) was an unconscious leader in that great revolution of popular taste and sentiment which supplanted the artificial by what is known as the romantic type in literature. He stands between the poets of the first and the poets of the third generation in the eighteenth century. In his fervid descriptions he enters a realm of poetry unknown to Pope; but he does not reach the poetry of emotion and passion in which Burns and later poets found their inspiration. Thomson was born in a rural corner of Scotland. He was educated at the University of Edinburgh, and it was intended that he should be a preacher; but in the theological class-room he was so imaginative in his interpretation and paraphrase of scripture that he was cautioned by his professor against the danger of exercising his poetic faculty in the pulpit. This caution diverted him from his calling, and turned him into the paths of literature. In 1725 he went to London, carrying with him an unfinished sketch of his poem on *Winter* (228). After much discouragement he succeeded in selling it for three guineas, and in winning a handsome purse from the gentleman to whom he had dedicated it with flattering phrases. The poem was received with favor. *Summer* was published in 1727; and Thomson then issued proposals for the completion of the cycle of *The Sea-*

sons by writing of *Spring* and *Autumn* (227). In 1731 he travelled in France, Switzerland and Italy as tutor to the son of the Lord Chancellor, and on his return to England in 1733, was appointed to a sinecure office in the Court of Chancery. Upon losing this office the Prince of Wales honored him with a pension, and a lucrative position was assigned him by the King. He purchased a snug cottage near Richmond, and lived in modest luxury. It was a genuine pleasure for him to live. He was of an extremely kind and generous disposition, making himself and all about him comfortable. In lazy leisure he carried on his literary work until his death in the forty-eighth year of his age. During his happy retirement he composed *The Castle of Indolence* (229), the most enchanting of the many imitations of Spenser's style. His easy, lazy, daily life breathed itself into this charming poem, and favored a display of the finest qualities of his poetic genius. But *The Seasons* is the corner-stone of Thomson's literary fame. In plan and in treatment it is original. Its description of the phenomena of nature during an English year is minute, and therefore it is a work much read by foreigners. The blank verse, though seldom showing any of the Miltonic grandeur, is rich and harmonious. Occasionally the style is pompous. In literary finish *The Castle of Indolence* is superior to *The Seasons*. The allegory of the enchanted "Land of Drowsi-head," in which the unhappy victims of Indolence find themselves hopeless captives, is relieved with occasional touches of a sly and pleasant humor, as in those passages where Thomson has drawn portraits of himself and of his friends.

The career of **William Collins** (1721-1759) was brief and unhappy. He exhibited from very early years the strong poetical powers of a genius which, ripened by practice and experience, would have made him the first lyrical writer of his age. But his ambition was fitful. He led a life of projects and dissipation; and the first shock of literary disappointment drove him to despondency, despondency to indulgence and indulgence to insanity. His first publication was a series of Eclogues, transferring the usual sentiments of pastoral verse to the scenery and manners of the East. Although these eclogues exhibit traces of vivid imagery and melodious verse, the real genius of Collins must be looked for in his *Odes*. Judged by them, he will be found entitled to a very high place. For true warmth of coloring, power of personification,

and dreamy sweetness of harmony, no English poet had till then appeared that could be compared to him. The ode entitled *The Passions* is frequently quoted; and many of the less popular ones, as that addressed to *Fear* (231), to *Pity*, to *Simplicity*, and that *On the Poetical Character*, contain happy strokes, sometimes expressed in wonderfully laconic language, and in singularly vivid portraiture. Some of the smaller and less ambitious lyrics, as the *Verses to the Memory of Thomson*, the *Dirge in Cymbeline*, and the exquisite verses *How Sleep the Brave*, are destined to a more enduring fame. All the qualities of Collins's finest thought and expression will be found united in the lovely little *Ode to Evening*, consisting merely of a few stanzas in blank verse, but so subtly harmonized that we may read them a thousand times without observing the absence of rhyme.

**Thomas Gray** (1716-1771), a man of vast and varied acquirements, whose life was devoted to the cultivation of letters, was greater than any former exclusively lyric poet of England. He received his education at Eton, and afterwards settled in learned retirement at Cambridge, where he became Professor of History in 1768. He acquired a high poetical reputation by his beautiful *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (234), published in 1747. This was followed, at intervals, by the *Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard* (233), the *Pindaric Odes*, and his other brilliant productions. His industry was untiring, and his learning undoubtedly great; for he had pushed his researches far beyond the usual limits of ancient classical philology, and was deeply versed in the romance literature of the Middle Ages, in modern French and Italian, and had studied the then almost unknown departments of Scandinavian and Celtic poetry. Many passages of his works are a mosaic of thought and imagery borrowed from Pindar, from the choral portions of the Attic tragedy, and from the majestic lyrics of the Italian poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but the fragments are fused into one solid body by the intense flame of a powerful and fervent imagination. His finest lyric compositions are the Odes entitled *The Bard*, that on the *Progress of Poesy* (235), the *Installation Ode* on the Duke of Grafton's election to the Chancellorship of the University, and the short but truly noble *Ode to Adversity*. The *Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard* is a masterpiece from beginning to end. The thoughts indeed are obvious enough, but the dignity with which they are expressed, the immense range of allu-

sion and description with which they are illustrated, and the finished grace of the language and versification in which they are embodied, give to this work somewhat of that inimitable perfection of design and execution which is seen in an antique statue. In *The Bard*, starting from the picturesque idea of a Welsh poet and patriot contemplating the victorious invasion of his country by Edward I., he passes in prophetic review the panorama of English History, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. In the odes entitled *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*, Gray borrowed his materials from the Scandinavian legends. The tone of the Norse poetry is perhaps not very faithfully reproduced; but these early attempts to revive the rude and archaic grandeur of the Eddas deserve grateful appreciation.

**Mark Akenside** (1721-1770), like Arbuthnot and Smollett, was a physician as well as a writer. His chief work is the philosophical poem entitled *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (232), in which he seeks to investigate and illustrate the emotions excited by beautiful objects in art and nature. The philosophical merit of his theories, indeed, is very often small, but the beauty of the imagery and language will ever secure for this lofty and thoughtful work the admiration of those readers who can content themselves with elevated thoughts, without looking for passages of strong feeling. Few English poets since Milton have been more deeply inspired by the spirit of classical antiquity.

A passing notice must suffice for **William Shenstone** (1714-1763), whose popularity, once considerable, has now given place to oblivion (230). His pleasing and original poem the *Schoolmistress* deserves to retain a place in every collection of English verse. This is a poem in the Spenserian stanza, and in antique diction. With a delightful mixture of quaint playfulness and tender description, it paints the dwelling, the character, and the pursuits of an old village dame who keeps a rustic day school.

The two brothers **Joseph Warton** (1722-1800) and **Thomas Warton** (1728-1790) were the sons of a Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and both brothers, especially the younger, deserve a place in the annals of our literature. Thomas, who was poet-laureate from 1785 until his death, rendered great service to letters by his agreeable but unfinished *History of English Poetry*. That work unfortunately comes to an abrupt termination just as the author is about

to enter upon the glorious period of the Elizabethan era; but it is valuable for research and for a warm tone of appreciative criticism. The best of his own original verses are sonnets, breathing a tender feeling, and showing much picturesque fancy.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."—*Samuel Johnson*.

"He was a friend to virtue, and in his most playful pages never forgets what is due to it. A gentleness, delicacy and purity of feeling distinguish whatever he wrote, and bear a correspondence to the generosity of a disposition which knew no bounds but his last guinea."—*Walter Scott*.

"His elegant and enchanting style flowed from him with so much facility that in whole quires he had seldom occasion to correct or alter a single word."—*Bishop Percy*.

"Goldsmith is one of the most pleasing of English writers. He touched upon every kind of excellence, and that with such inimitable grace, that where he failed of originality most, he had ever a freshness and a charm."—*Mrs. S. C. Hall*.

"There was in his character much to love, but little to respect. His heart was soft even to weakness; he was so generous that he quite forgot to be just; he forgave injuries so readily that he might be said to invite them; and was so liberal to beggars that he had nothing left for his tailor and his butcher. He was vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident."—*T. B. Macaulay*.

"Think of him reckless, thoughtless, vain, if you like—but merciful, gentle, generous, full of love and pity. His humor delighting us still; his song fresh and beautiful as when first he charmed with it; his words in all our mouths; his very weaknesses beloved and familiar; his benevolent spirit seems still to smile on us; to do gentle kindnesses; to succor with sweet charity; to soothe, caress, and forgive; to plead with the fortunate for the unhappy and the poor."—*W. M. Thackeray*.

**Oliver Goldsmith** (1728–1774) is the most charming and versatile writer of the eighteenth century. We place him among the poets, but we might as well name him with the novelists, with the historians, or with the ethical writers, for he belongs to each of those classes, and in each of them he has written for delighted readers. He was born at the village of Pallas, in Ireland, the son of the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a poor curate of the Established Church. In childhood he was attacked by small-pox, and through life he bore the ugly scars. At seventeen years of age he obtained a servant's scholarship at the University of Dublin. He neglected his opportunities for study, and be-

came somewhat notorious for his irregularities, his disobedience to authority, his improvidence and his morbid charity. After leaving the university he tried successively to enter the professions of the teacher, the clergyman, the lawyer, and the physician. In 1755-6 he travelled on foot through Holland, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Much of the way he journeyed as a beggar, playing his flute for the peasants, in order to gain a supper and a bed. While thus wandering in the guise of a beggar he sketched the plan of his famous poem, *The Traveller* (199). In 1756 he found his way back to England, and for eight years struggled against starvation, sometimes as a chemist's clerk, sometimes as an usher in boarding-schools, sometimes as a physician among the most squalid, and much of the time as a plodding drudge for the booksellers. His literary apprenticeship was passed in writing school-books, tales for children, prefaces, indexes, reviews of books, and occasional articles for the magazines. In this period of obscure drudgery he composed the *Letters from a Citizen of the World* (197), giving a description of English life and manners in the assumed character of a Chinese traveller; a *Life of Beau Nash*; and a short and gracefully narrated *History of England*, in the form of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son. The publication of his beautiful poem of the *Traveller* in 1764 was the beginning of his uninterrupted literary success. His writings were sought by publishers who were ready to pay him generous prices. But his folly and improvidence kept him plunged in debt. In 1766 (*The Vicar of Wakefield*) appeared, that masterpiece of gentle humor and delicate tenderness; and in the next year his comedy, *The Good-natured Man*, though failing upon the stage, brought him a purse of five hundred pounds. Those earnings were quickly scattered, and Goldsmith put himself at the taskwork of writing a *History of Rome* for the pub-



lishers. Such a work, hurriedly written, was, of course, wanting in research, and valueless as an authority; but it displayed the author's grace of style and vivacity of narration. In 1770 he published his finest poem, (*The Deserted Village*) (200), and by it won new fame. Five editions were sold at once. Three years after, he wrote his comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, one of the gayest, pleasantest, and most amusing pieces that the English stage can boast.

Goldsmith was now one of the popular authors of his time. His society was courted by the wits, artists, statesmen and writers who formed a brilliant circle round Johnson and Reynolds; and he became a member of the famous Literary Club. His unconquerable improvidence, however, still kept him the slave of booksellers, who obliged him to waste his exquisite talent on works for which he neither possessed the requisite knowledge nor could make the necessary researches. Thus he successively put forth as taskwork, the *History of England*, the *History of Greece*, and the *History of Animated Nature*, the two former works being mere compilations of second-hand facts, and the last an epitomized translation of Buffon. He died at the age of forty-six, deeply mourned by the brilliant circle of friends to whom his very weaknesses had endeared him, and followed by the tears and blessings of many wretches whom his inexhaustible benevolence had relieved.

In everything Goldsmith wrote, prose or verse, serious or comic, there is a peculiar delicacy and purity of sentiment. His genius, though in its earlier years surrounded by squalid distress, was incapable of being sullied by any stain of vulgarity. No quality in his writings is more striking than the union of grotesque humor with pure, pensive tenderness. While literature lasts, readers will linger over Goldsmith's sketches of the scenery and natural peculiarities of

various countries, and over the details in the picture of "sweet Auburn." The *Vicar of Wakefield*,\* too, in spite of the absurdity of the plot, is one of those works that the world will not let die. Its charm is too exquisite to be forgotten. It was colored with the hues of childhood's memory; and the central figure in the group of shadows from the past that came to cheer the poor London author in his lonely garret, was the image of his dead father: "For," says John Forster in his life of Goldsmith, "they who have loved, laughed and wept with the man in black of the *Citizen of the World*, the Preacher of *The Deserted Village*, and Doctor Primrose in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, have given laughter, love and tears to the Rev. Charles Goldsmith." The gentle and quiet humor embodied in the simple Dr. Primrose, the delicate yet vigorous contrasts of character in the other personages, the purity, cheerfulness, and gayety which envelop all the scenes and incidents, insure the work its immortality.

Goldsmith's two comedies are written in two different methods, the *Good-natured Man* being a comedy of character, and *She Stoops to Conquer*, a comedy of intrigue. The merit of the first piece chiefly consists in the truly laughable personage of Croaker, and in the excellent scene where the disguised bailiffs are passed off on Miss Richland as the friends

\* Doctor Johnson gives the following account of his first knowing of *The Vicar of Wakefield*:—

"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it and saw its merits; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*.

of Honeywood, whose house and person they have seized. But in *She Stoops to Conquer* we have a choice specimen of the comedy of intrigue, where the interest mainly depends upon a tissue of lively and farcical incidents, and where the characters, though lightly sketched, form a gallery of eccentric pictures. The best proof of Goldsmith's success in this piece is the constancy with which it has always kept possession of the stage. Peals of laughter ever greet the lively bustle of its scenes, the pleasant absurdities of Young Marlow, Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, and the admirable Tony Lumpkin.

Among Goldsmith's minor poems *The Haunch of Venison* deserves special attention on account of its easy narrative and its accurate sketching of commonplace society. In the poem *Retaliation*, written as a reply to taunting epitaphs on himself, he has given portraits of some of his distinguished literary friends, and he has painted them with a hand at once refined and vigorous.


For further readings on this topic, see Irving's *Oliver Goldsmith*; Forster's *Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith*; Walter Scott's *Life of Goldsmith*; *N. A. Review*, Vol. XLV, p. 91; De Quincey's works; *Essays on the Poets*, Vol. IX; Macaulay's *Essays*, Vol. VI.

**William Cowper** (1731-1800) is eminently the poet of the domestic affections, and the exponent of that strong religious feeling which, towards the end of the eighteenth century, began to penetrate and modify all the relations of social life (236-240). His story is singularly sad. He was of an ancient and illustrious family, the grand-nephew of Lord Chancellor Cowper. From his early childhood he was exceedingly sensitive. His mother died when he was six years of age, and he was sent to one of the English boarding-schools where the bullies were allowed to abuse the younger boys, and there he was brutally persecuted for two years. For seven years he was at the famous Westminster school, and then he was apprenticed to an attorney. By the influence of his friends a desirable position was secured for him in the service of the House of Lords; but his sensitive nature was so terrified at the thought of presenting himself for a formal examination, that he fell into gloomy

despondency and attempted suicide. A short confinement in an asylum restored him from his insanity; but he was so shaken by the attack that he was unfitted for active life. Four times during his life madness assailed him, and his last six years were continually shrouded in its pitiful gloom. Upon his recovery from the first attack he retired into the country, and placed himself under the care of the family of Mr. Unwin, a clergyman in Huntingdon. Cowper's virtues and accomplishments won the good-will of the family circle, and especially won the tender and life-long friendship of Mrs. Unwin. His mind, still smarting under its affliction, made him the victim of religious melancholy, and tormented him with despair concerning the salvation of his soul. On the death of Mr. Unwin, Cowper removed with the family to Olney, where he became intimately acquainted with John Newton, an eminent clergyman. He led an easy, quiet life, amusing himself with the flowers and the landscape. As a pastime and as a means of escaping from his melancholy, he wrote a few hymns for Newton's collection, and cultivated his literary taste. The force, grace, and originality of his compositions soon acquired popularity, and he pursued as a profession what he had at first taken up as a diversion. His poetical talent did not flower until late. He was more than fifty years of age when his first volume was published. It contained long didactic and satiric poems entitled *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, and *Retirement*. The sale of his book was small. His sentiments, though sometimes genial, and always delicate, were too grave and desponding to receive the popular applause. At about this time Lady Austen formed his acquaintance, and urged him to trim his pen for gayer verse. At her suggestion the famous ballad of *John Gilpin* was written. She playfully gave him "The Sofa" as a theme, and thus started him in the composition of that humorous, graceful, reflective poem, *The Task* (238). His most laborious, but least successful undertaking was the translation of the Iliad into English blank verse. He justly considered that the neat and artificial style of Pope had done scant justice to the father of Greek poetry; but in endeavoring to give greater force and vigor to his own version, he fell into a fault of which Pope could not be accused, and made his translation too harsh and rugged, without approaching one whit nearer to the true character of the original.

The longer and more important poems of Cowper are written in an original manner. They are a union of reflection, satire, description, and moral declamation. Some of them are in blank verse, while in others he employed rhyme. His aim was to keep up a natural and colloquial style. He is the enemy of that pomp of diction which was in his time regarded as essential to poetry. His pictures of life and nature, whether of rural scenery or of indoor life, have not been surpassed for truth and picturesqueness. His satirical sketches of the follies and absurdities of manners, and his indignant denunciations of national offences against piety and morality, are equally remarkable, in the one case, for sharpness and humor, and in the other for a lofty grandeur of sentiment. The district in which he lived is one of the least romantic in England; yet nothing more victoriously proves that true poetical genius can give a charm and an interest to the most unpromising subjects, than the fact that Cowper has communicated to the level banks of the Ouse a magic that will never pass away. The quiet home circle of middle English life, the tea-table, the newspaper, and the hearth, have derived from him a beauty and a dignity which other men have failed to give to the proudest scenes of camps and courts. In spite of his morbid religious opinions, many of his humorous pieces exhibit an effulgence of unclouded gayety. His shrewd observation, delicate painting of nature, and intense religious feeling have endeared him to the great middle class of English readers. Many of his shorter lyrics are purely elegant. Nothing in our poetry is more touching and beautiful than lines written in his old age *On Receiving My Mother's Picture*.

Cowper's *Letters* are famous. They show the poet in his most amiable light and invest his character with a halo of goodness. Their style is free from all affectation. They should be studied carefully by all who would excel in this most elegant of accomplishments. Southey pronounces him "the best of English letter-writers."



The latter half of the eighteenth century was remarkable for several nearly contemporaneous attempts at literary imposture—the poetical forgeries of Macpherson, Chatterton, and Ireland. The first of these three has survived the ordeal of strict critical examina-

tion. **James Macpherson** (1738–1796), originally a country schoolmaster, and afterwards in the service of the English and East India governments, professed to have accumulated, in his travels through the Highlands of Scotland, an immense mass of fragments of ancient poetry composed in the Gaelic or Erse dialect, common to that country and Ireland. The translations, which Macpherson claimed to have made from the originals, were composed in a pompous and declamatory prose (243). Upon their publication a furious war ensued on the question of their authenticity. The Highlanders, eager for the honor of their country, declared for the genuineness of the literature, and said that the name of Ossian, and the incidents of the stories, had been told in the familiar traditions of the Highlands. It was also urged in their support that Celtic traditions in Ireland strikingly resembled the sentiments of *Ossian*. The English critics, on the other hand, doubted the antiquity of the papers, and demanded a view of the original poems. This Macpherson refused to grant, on the ground that he had been treated with indignity by those who scorned his pretensions. They then cited against him his plagiarisms from the whole range of literature, —from Homer, the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, and even from Thomson. But in spite of opposition and ridicule the papers were translated into the leading languages of Europe and commanded the wondering attention of Goethe, Hume, and many other distinguished men of letters. In Germany the admiration of these productions has not subsided. The conviction lingers there, that they were the work of some grand old epic poet. Macpherson accumulated a considerable fortune. He died without disclosing the originals of his professed discoveries, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The annals of literature hardly present a more extraordinary example of precocious genius than that of **Thomas Chatterton** (1752–1770), nor an instance of a career more brief and melancholy (244). He was born in 1752, the son of a poor sexton and parish schoolmaster at Bristol; and he died, by suicide, before he had completed his eighteenth year. At eleven years of age he produced verses which will more than bear a comparison with the early poems of any author; and though he had received little education beyond that of a parish school, he conceived the project of deceiving all the learned of his age, and of creating, it may almost be said, a whole literature of the past.

In the muniment room of a church at Bristol there was a chest called Canynge's coffer. (Canynge was a rich citizen who lived in the reign of Edward IV.) The coffer contained charters and other documents connected with Canynge's gifts to the church. The young poet familiarized himself with the sight of these antiquated writings, and determined to forge papers that could be palmed off upon the credulous. These he produced gradually, generally taking advantage of some topic of public interest to contribute to the local newspapers or to his acquaintances, the pretended originals, or transcripts of pretended originals, having some relation to the subject. Thus, on the opening of a new bridge over the Avon, he produced an account of processions, tournaments, religious solemnities, and other ceremonies which had taken place on the opening of the old bridge. To Mr. Burguin, a pewterer of the town who had a taste for heraldry, he gave a pedigree reaching back to William the Conqueror. Horace Walpole was then writing his anecdotes of British Painters, and Chatterton furnished him with a long list of mediæval artists who had flourished in Bristol. Besides these documents he claimed to have discovered old poems in the chest. They are of great variety and unquestionable merit; and though modern criticism will instantly detect in them the most glaring marks of forgery, yet their brilliancy and their number were enough to deceive many learned scholars in an age when minute antiquarian knowledge of the Middle Ages was much rarer than at present. In his eagerness to incrust his diction with the rust of antiquity, he overlays his words with such an accumulation of consonants as belong to the orthography of no age of our language. He has also, as was inevitable, sometimes made a slip in the use of an old word, as when he borrowed the expression *mortmal* found in Chaucer's description of the Cook, he employed it to signify, not a disease, the gangrene, but a dish. Burning with pride, hope, and literary ambition, the unhappy lad betook himself to London, where, after struggling a short time with distress, and almost with starvation, he poisoned himself on the 25th of August, 1770. Singularly enough his acknowledged poems, though indicating very great powers, are manifestly inferior to those he wrote in the assumed character of Thomas Rowley.

**William Henry Ireland** (1777-1835) deserves mention only on account of his Shakespearean forgeries, imposed upon the public

while he was yet a boy. Their success was due entirely to his skill in imitating old handwriting, and to the credulousness and the stupidity of those who were deceived by his work. He was soon compelled to acknowledge his guilt.

George Crabbe (1754-1832) is the poet of the passions in humble life. Byron calls him "Nature's sternest painter, yet the best." He was born at the little seaport town of Aldborough in Suffolk, where his father was a collector of customs; and after a dreamy and studious childhood, he was apprenticed to a surgeon and apothecary. Passionately fond of literature, he determined to seek his fortune in London, carrying with him several unfinished poems. After many disappointments he found himself reduced to despair; when he addressed a manly and affecting letter to Edmund Burke, who immediately admitted him to his house and his friendship. From this time Crabbe's fortune changed; he was assisted, both with money and advice, in bringing out his poem of *The Library*, was induced to enter the Church, and was promised the powerful influence of Lord Chancellor Thurlow. He became domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland; but after marriage with a young lady to whom he had been long attached, he changed his position for the humbler but more independent life of a parish priest, and in this occupation he continued until his death.

It was not till the appearance of *The Village*, in 1783, that Crabbe struck out that path in which he had neither predecessor nor rival. The success of this poem was great, for it was the first attempt to paint the manners and existence of the laboring class, without dressing them up in the artificial colors of fiction. In his next work, *The Parish Register* (246), the public saw the gradual ripening of his vigorous and original genius; and this was followed, at comparatively short intervals, by *The Borough*, *Tales in Verse*, and *Tales of the Hall*. These, with the striking but painful poems, written in a different measure, entitled *Sir Eustace Grey* and *The Hall of Justice*, make up Crabbe's large and valuable contribution to the poetical literature of his country. Almost all these works are constructed upon a peculiar and generally similar plan. Crabbe starts with some description, as of the Village, the Parish Church, the Borough, from which he naturally proceeds to deduce a series of separate episodes, usually of middle and humble life, appropriate to the leading idea. Thus in *The Parish Register* we have



the most remarkable births, marriages, and deaths that are supposed to take place in a year amid a rural population; in *The Borough* (245) we have the lives and adventures of the most prominent characters that figure on the narrow stage of a small provincial town. With the exception of *Sir Eustace Grey* and *The Hall of Justice*, which are written in a short-lined stanza, Crabbe's poems are in heroic verse. The contrast is strange between the neat Pope-like regularity of the metre, and the deep passion, the intense reality, and the quaint humor of the scenes displayed. No poet has more subtly traced the motives which regulate human conduct. His descriptions of nature, too, are marked by power of rendering interesting the most unattractive features of the external world, by the sheer force of truth and exactness. The village-tyrant, the poacher, the smuggler, the miserly old maid, the pauper, and the criminal, are drawn with the same vivid force that paints the squalid streets of the fishing-town, or the fen, the quay, and the heath.

The movement in the direction of greater freedom can be detected in many minor poets of the time; and its influence is nowhere more noticeable than in the fact that, towards the close of the eighteenth century, woman, who had been shamefully illiterate in the preceding generation, wins respect in the walks of literature. **Hannah More** (1745-1833) was the most influential writer of her sex. Johnson considered her the best of "female versifiers," but her prose is equal, if not superior, to her verse. She was the daughter of a schoolmaster in Gloucestershire. Her first works were dramatic. *The Search after Happiness*, written at the age of sixteen, *The Inflexible Captive*, written a year later, and a few of her tales, had given her so good a name that when she removed to London, at about her twenty-eighth year, she was admitted to the literary circle of Johnson and Burke. A volume of her *Poems* was published in 1786, portions of which were termed by Johnson a great performance. Becoming weary of the life of London, she removed to Bristol. There her pen was busy,—prose and poetry flowing from it constantly. Her tales against Jacobins and Levelers reached a circulation of a million. Her best known works are—*Thoughts on the Manners of the Great*, 1788; *On Female Education*, 1799; *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, 1809; and *Practical Piety*, 1811. "She did, perhaps, as much real good in her generation as any woman that ever held a pen."

Mrs. More's \* style is flowing, and often sparkles with the light of a pleasant humor. Her later works are of a more sombre cast, from the deeper impressions which religion seemed to be making upon her. *Caleb's* is perhaps the chief of her works—a fiction of much beauty in style, with a mixture of quiet irony; the plot is well evolved, but the characters are too few, and the incidents too tame, to make it in the present day a readable book. It has been called a “dramatic sermon.”

A comic drama appeared contemporaneously with the more romantic poetry. With a single exception its writers were men who failed of an enduring fame. **Richard Brinsley Sheridan** (1751–1816) was a genius of versatile and brilliant powers. He was famous as a parliamentary orator; but his highest fame was achieved as a dramatist. Byron says that “the intellectual reputation of Sheridan was truly enviable, that he had made the best speech—that on the *Bigums of Oude*—written the two best comedies, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* (253) the best opera, *The Duenna*, and the best farce, *The Critic*.” His career was extravagant and imprudent. The ingenious shifts by which he endeavored to stave off his embarrassments, and the jokes with which he disarmed even his angriest creditors, would furnish materials for a most amusing jest-book. His repartees and witticisms made him the darling of society. He died in poverty, but was buried with princely pomp.

\* **Hannah More**, though never married, was in her own day, and still is named *Mrs. More*. This title she acquired, in her dignified years, according to a courteous custom then observed in England.

To  
Crown

## ROBERT BURNS.

"Burns is by far the greatest poet that ever sprung from the bosom of the people and lived and died in an humble condition."—*Professor (John) Wilson.*

"O he was a good-looking fine fellow!—he was that; rather black an' ill-colored; but he couldna help that, ye ken. He was a strong, manly-looking chap; nane o' your skilpit milk-and-water dandies: but a sterling, substantial fellow, who wadna hae feared the deil suppose he had met him. An' then siccan an ee he had!" —*Memoir of Burns.*

"His person was strong and robust, his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. . . . I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. . . . There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence without the slightest presumption."—*Sir Walter Scott.*

"None but the most narrow-minded bigots think of his errors and frailties but with sympathy and indulgence; none but the blindest enthusiasts can deny their existence."—*James Hogg.*

"He has in all his compositions great force of conception, and great spirit and animation in its expression. He has taken a large range through the region of Fancy, and naturalized himself in all her climates."—*Francis Jeffrey.*

"As a poet Burns stands in the front rank. His conceptions are all original; his thoughts are new and weighty; his style unborrowed; and he owes no honor to the subjects which his muse selected, for they are ordinary, and such as would have tempted no poet, save himself, to sing about."—*Allan Cunningham.*

The greatest poet that Scotland has produced is **Robert Burns** (1759–1796) (**247–251**). He was born at the hamlet of Alloway in Ayrshire, and was the son of a peasant farmer of the humblest class. Popular education at that period was diffused in Scotland more generally than in any other country of Europe; and Burns received the training of the common school. Impelled by his eagerness for knowledge he early became acquainted with some of the masterpieces of English literature. In this way he

acquired the pure diction of classical English authors, and was able to use it with perfect facility when he took up the poet's pen. *The Spectator*, and the volumes of Pope, Thomson, Shenstone and Sterne were on the shelf in his cabin. His early years were spent in laboring as a peasant on his father's farm. In the correspondence of his later years he says: "This kind of life, the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year, when love made me a poet." His "first performance," the song of *Handsome Nell*, revealed to him a talent by whose use he drove away some of the gloom of his youth. When his muse would not help him in writing the song, she gave him expression for the satire, the revery, or the poetic epistle. Until his twenty-eighth year he continued his weary struggle against poverty. He was driven from one farm to another in his desperate attempts to improve his condition. At last, in despair, he determined to cross the ocean, and seek his fortune in the West Indies. In order to raise funds for the voyage he was induced to publish poems which had won the heartiest local applause. The sale of the volume brought him twenty guineas. Out of the money he bought his passage and awaited the sailing of his ship. On the last night that he expected to be in Scotland, he wrote what, he said, should be the last song he would ever measure in Caledonia,—*"The gloomy night is gathering fast."* But the clouds broke with the dawn; for a letter from a poetical critic gave him encouragement that an edition of his poems would be received with favor in Edinburgh. The voyage was abandoned. His own words are: "I immediately posted to Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance or letters of introduction. The baneful star which had so long shed its blasting influence upon my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir." But he needed no letters of introduction. His songs had gone before him. The literary and the gay of the Capital wel-

comed the singer. The new edition of his poems was received with an enthusiasm that made "The Ayrshire Ploughman" the lion of the town.\* This success put money in his purse; and he was able to gratify his intense desire to see the celebrated scenery, and the places of historical interest in his native country. After spending the summer of 1787 in travel, he returned to Edinburgh with the reasonable expectation of securing from those whose praises and friendship he had won, such employment as would enable him to devote some of his time to his muse. While waiting for their help he joined in their convivial revelries. His social nature led him into intemperance. When his money was gone, and he was compelled to find support, a place was given him as a gauger of liquors in his old district. He rented a farm and lived upon a meagre income. Now his spirit was buoyant and gleeful, now despondent. His strong constitution, undermined by excesses, soon broke down, and the poet died at Dumfries, in the thirty-seventh year of his age.

The highest poetical qualities—tenderness the most exquisite, humor the broadest and most refined, the most delicate perception of natural beauty, the highest finish and the easiest negligence of style, are found in the writings of Burns. They are chiefly lyrics of inimitable charm; but

\* "It needs no effort of the imagination to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail, at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time, in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos."—*Lockhart*.

he has also written entrancing narrative and most intense satire. The variety of his poetic talent is best displayed in (*Tam O'Shanter*). In no other poem of the same length can there be found a blending of so much brilliant description, touching pathos, and quaint, sly humor; nor is there elsewhere in our literature such a combination of the terrific and the ludicrous. Another inimitable poem, half-narrative, but set thick with glorious songs, is the *Jolly Beggars*: careless vagabond jollity, roaring mirth and gipsy merriment, have never been better expressed. In his *Address to the De'il*, *Death and Dr. Hornbook*, *The Twa Dogs*, and the dialogue between the Old and New Bridges of Ayr, Burns gives us humorous and picturesque description with reflections and thoughtful moralizing upon life and society. In the poem descriptive of rustic fortune-telling on *Halloween*, in the *Vision of Liberty*, where Burns gives such a sublime picture of his own early aspirations, in the unequalled sorrow that breathes through the *Lament for Glencairn*, in *Scotch Drink*, the *Haggis*, the epistles to *Captain Grose* and *Matthew Henderson*, in the exquisite description of the death of the old ewe Mailie, and the poet's address to his old mare, we find the same prevailing mixture of pathos and humor, that truest pathos which finds its materials in the common every-day objects of life, and that truest humor which is allied to the deepest feeling. The famous lines *On Turning up a Mouse's Nest with the Plough*, and on destroying in the same way a *Mountain Daisy*, will ever remain among the gems of poetry. The Dialogue between the *Twa Dogs* is an elaborate comparison of the relative degrees of virtue and happiness granted to the rich and the poor. His description of the joys and consolations of the poor man's lot is perhaps even more beautiful in this poem than in the more generally popular (*Cotter's Saturday Night*) (251). Certainly there has never been a tribute paid to

the virtues of the poor, nobler than has been given by Burns in these two poems.

Those of Burns's songs that are written in pure English, in some instances have a pretentious air. But there is no affectation in his verse when it flows in the rhythms of his native dialect. The list of subjects adapted to the purpose of the song-writer is always very limited—love, patriotism, and pleasure, constitute the whole. In the song *Æ Fond Kiss and then we Part* is concentrated the whole essence of a thousand love-poems; the heroic outbreak of patriotism in *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled* is a lyric of most stirring force; and in those of a calmer and more lamenting character, as *Ye Banks and Braes*, there is the finest union of personal sentiment with the most complete assimilation of the poet's mind to the loveliness of external nature.

## REMARKS ON THE LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

In reviewing the literature of the eighteenth century the student will be reminded that it contains the most powerful satire and the most elegant light essays that have been produced. In it the first great works of fiction, the first distinctively pronounced scepticism, the first carefully written histories, are found flowing from the pens of Englishmen. In it, too, our poetry of the fireside was first sung.

The literature of the century may be divided into three eras, and they are distinctly marked: I. The Augustan Age; so it was called by the men of the next generation, who felt that in it English literature had reached such paramount excellence as the literature of Rome attained in the age of Augustus. It closes with the reign of George I. The attitude of the government towards literary men was somewhat changed at the accession of George II.; a few writers of note appeared at that time, and at about that time some of the bright stars of the Augustan galaxy disappeared.—II. The Reign

of George II. (1727-1760). It was not illumined by such brilliant men as Newton and Addison. There was less of elegance, but there was gain in seriousness. There was more earnest questioning than in the former age. Men were no longer satisfied with attacking the advocates of principles, they attacked the principles themselves. Hume published his philosophical essays, startled his readers by the audacity of his questioning, and prepared the way for study of German philosophy and scepticism. His example led the thinkers of a later generation to study Kant and to recognize German thought and literature. He also alarmed the theologians, so that they took up weapons of defence, and fought for the honor of English religious opinions, and for the sacredness of the Scripture record. A reaction from the boldly pronounced scepticism called forth earnest reformers. They demanded practical as well as theoretical deference to Christ's teachings. In sermon and treatise and song, the Wesleys and Whitefield and Watts charmed the saintly, and terrified the sinful. They created a demand for simple, fervent religious literature. The progressive seriousness shows itself in the essays that would rival the glory of the *Spectator*, in the philosophy that would secure firm foundation for the religious faith of the intellectual man, and, where it would be least expected, even in the poetry that is imitative of Pope.—III. The Reign of George III. (1760-1820). Here we find a poetry simpler than in either of the preceding generations. The song gave thrilling and laughing echoes. The imagination was revived, and poetic life was healthful. Philosophy turned the seriousness to practical account.

The century of literature under consideration was superficial in its thinking, and held itself in high esteem.\* But it had a record to be pleased with; for it was opening new lines of literary work, and was producing earnest and original thinkers.

That century was the formative period of English prose style. It developed two distinct modes of literary expression. The first in order of time and in excellence is the style approaching the diction and idioms of elegant conversation. Addison is its best representa-

\* The poor eighteenth century was critical, negative, and unpoetic. . . . It was one of those seasons of comparative diminution of the general vital energy of our species."—*Masson's Essays*, p. 350.



ENGLISH LITERATURE,  
FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE AUGUSTAN AGE TO THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,  
As discussed in the six preceding chapters.

THE ARTIFICIAL POETS <i>of the first half of the Eighteenth Century.</i>	{ Alexander Pope, John Gay, Matthew Prior, Edward Young.
PROSE WRITERS <i>of the first half of the Eighteenth Century.</i>	{ Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke George Berkeley, Mary Wortley Montagu.
THE FIRST GREAT NOVELISTS.	{ Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias George Smollett, Laurence Sterne.
THE FIRST GREAT HISTORIANS.	{ David Hume, William Robertson, Edward Gibbon.
ETHICAL, POLITICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL WRITERS <i>of the latter half of the Eighteenth Century.</i>	{ Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Sir William Blackstone, William Paley.
THE DAWN OF ROMANTIC POETRY.	{ James Thomson, William Collins, Thomas Gray, Mark Akenside, William Shenstone, Joseph Warton, Thomas Warton, [Oliver Goldsmith], William Cowper, <i>The Literary Impostors</i> { James Macpherson, George Crabbe. { Thomas Chatterton, [Hannah More], { William Henry Ireland [Richard Brinsley Sheridan].

ROBERT BURNS.



tive. The second style seeks harmonies of sound, avoids elliptical idioms, is scholastic, and is based upon the idea that there must be more dignity in writing than in the best speaking. Johnson is its best exponent and champion. The former style is English; the latter is Latinic. They are both influencing the writing of our own time; but the simpler method commands the higher approval.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

WALTER SCOTT.

" Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue  
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,  
Follow this wondrous potentate."—*William Wordsworth.*

THE great revolution in literary taste which substituted romantic for classical sentiment and subject, and culminated in the poems and novels of Walter Scott, is traceable to the labors of **Bishop Thomas Percy** (1728–1811). In 1765 he published a collection of old ballads under the title of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Many of these ballads had been preserved only in manuscript, and others had been printed on loose sheets in the rudest manner for circulation among the lower orders of people. Many authors before him, as, for instance, Addison and Sir Philip Sidney, had expressed the admiration which cultivated taste must ever feel for the rude, but inimitable charms of the old ballad-poets; but Percy was the first who undertook a systematic and general examination of the neglected treasures. He found, in collecting these compositions, that the majority of the oldest and most interesting were distinctly traceable, both as regards their subjects and their dialect, to the North Countrée, that is, to the frontier region between England and Scotland which had been the scene of the most striking incidents of predatory warfare, such as those recorded in the noble ballads of *Cherry Chase*

and the *Battle of Otterburn*. Besides a very large number of these purely heroic ballads, Percy gave specimens of songs and lyrics extending down to a comparatively late period of English history, even to his own century. But the chief interest of his collection, and the chief service he rendered to literature by his publication, is in the earlier portion. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence exerted by the *Reliques*. This book has been studied with the most intense interest by generation after generation of English poets, and undoubtedly has contributed to give the first direction to the youthful genius of many of our most illustrious writers. The boyish enthusiasm of Walter Scott was stirred by the vivid recitals of the old Border rhapsodists. Percy's volumes\* gave him the sentiment that culminated in the (*Lady of the Lake*), and in *Waverley*.

Our literary history presents few examples of a career so brilliant as that of **Walter Scott (254-263)**.

**B. 1771.]** "A genius at once so vigorous and versatile, a productiveness so magnificent and so sustained, will with difficulty be found, though we ransack the wide realms of ancient and modern letters." He was connected, both by the father's and mother's side, with several of those ancient, historic Border-families whose warlike memories his genius was destined to make immortal. In consequence of delicate health in early life he passed much of his time at the farm of his grandfather near Kelso, where he was surrounded with legends, ruins, and historic localities. He was afterwards sent to the High-School, and then to the University of Edinburgh. He was not distinguished as a student; but among his fellows he was famous for his talent in telling stories. After leaving the University, he

\* "The first time I could scrape a few shillings together—which were not common occurrences with me—I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes: nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm."  
—Scott, in *Lockhart's Life*.

entered the profession of the law. It had little charm for him. English, German, and Italian authors easily won him away from his law-books. The direction of his mind was towards the poetical and antiquarian works of the Middle Ages; but just at that time there had been awakened in the intellectual circles of Edinburgh a taste for German literature. Scott's first appearance as an author was in translations from Bürger. Scott was now residing with his young wife at Lasswade. He formed the purpose of rescuing from oblivion the large stores of Border ballads still current among the descendants of the Liddesdale and Annandale moss-troopers, and he travelled into those picturesque regions where he not only gathered a vast treasure of unedited legends, but also made himself familiar with the scenery and manners of that country over which he was to cast the magic of his genius. Three volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* were soon published. The learning and taste of this work gave Scott a high reputation. His success was tempting him to abandon the profession of the law altogether, and to devote himself to literature, when an appointment as Sheriff of Selkirkshire brought him to a decision. He changed his residence to a pleasant farm at Ashestiel on the Tweed, and six years after he appeared before the public as an original romantic poet. In 1805 (*The Lay of the Last Minstrel*) was published. In rapid succession followed (*Marmion*), (*The Lady of the Lake*), (*Rokeby*), and (*The Lord of the Isles*); not to enumerate many less important works, such as *The Vision of Don Roderick*, *The Bridal of Triermain*, *Harold the Dauntless*, and *The Field of Waterloo*. We cannot overstate the rapture of enthusiasm with which these poems were received. They were written rapidly and with unstinted freshness. With *Rokeby* the popularity of Scott's poetry, though still very great, perceptibly declined. This may have been due in part to the fact that he was not fortunate in the choice of the

theme for that poem, and in part to the eclipsing glory of Byron's genius. Aware of the declining public favor, he immediately and quietly abandoned poetry to enter the field of the novelist, where he could stand without a rival.

Nine years earlier, *Waverley* had been sketched out and thrown aside. In 1814 it was published without the author's name,—the first of the inimitable *Waverley Novels*. The town and the country were wild in its praise, and all were curious to know who the writer might be. The secret was long kept. During the seventeen years between 1814 and 1831 he wrote the long series of novels, and wrote them with such inconceivable facility, that, on an average, two of the works appeared in one year. During this same period he also published many works in the departments of history, criticism, and biography; among them, *A Life of Napoleon*, the *Tales of a Grandfather*, the amusing *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, and extensive editions, with lives, of Dryden and Swift. Such activity is rare indeed in the history of letters; still rarer, when combined with such general excellence in the products. The impulse to this prodigious industry was Scott's passionate and long-cherished ambition to found a territorial family, and to be able to live the life of a provincial magnate. In 1811 he had purchased about one hundred acres of land on the banks of the Tweed, and now, encouraged by the immense profits accruing from his works, he purchased one piece of land after another, planted and improved the estate, and transformed his modest cottage at Abbotsford into a mansion crowded with the rarest antiquarian relics. There he exercised a princely hospitality, "doing the honors of Scotland" to those who were attracted in crowds by the splendor of his name. The funds needed for such a mode of life he supplied, partly by his unwearying pen, and partly by engaging secretly in large commercial speculations with the printing and publishing firm of the Ballantynes, his

intimate friends and school-fellows. But by the failure of the Ballantynes in the commercial crisis of 1825, Scott found himself ruined, and moreover responsible for a gigantic debt. He might easily have escaped from his liabilities by taking advantage of the bankrupt law; but his sense of honor was so high and delicate that he asked only for time, and resolutely set himself to pay off, by unremitting literary toil, the vast sum of one hundred and seventeen thousand pounds. Woodstock was his first novel after his misfortune. It was written in three months, and brought him £8,228. The nine volumes of the Life of Napoleon followed, and for that work he received £18,000. Thus encouraged, he toiled on with unflagging energy, determined to pay the last guinea due to the creditors of his firm. Volume after volume came from his pen—not so joyous as the earlier ones had been—and he had all but reached the goal, when the tired body broke down. There is no more touching or sublime spectacle than that of this great genius, in the full plenitude of his powers, voluntarily and without a word of repining, abandoning that splendor he was so well qualified to adorn, and that rural life he so well knew how to appreciate, and shutting himself up in a small house in Edinburgh, to wipe out, by incessant literary task-work, the liabilities which he had too much delicacy to evade.

In 1820 Scott had been raised to the dignity of the baronetcy, on account of his literary greatness; for the enchanting *Waverley Novels*, though anonymously published, were universally ascribed to him, as the only man in Great Britain whose peculiar acquirements and turn of genius could have given birth to them. Nevertheless, the mystery of the true authorship, long a very transparent one, was maintained by Scott with great care. It was not till the failure of Ballantyne's house rendered concealment any longer impossible that he formally avowed himself their



author.\* In the year 1830 his mind, exhausted by incessant toil, began to show symptoms of weakness; and in the autumn of the next year he was sent to Italy and the Mediterranean in the vain hope of re-establishing his health. He returned to Scotland after an absence of six months; and after lingering in a state of almost complete unconsciousness for a short time, he died at Abbotsford on the 21st of September, 1832. His body was buried in the old ruin of Dryburgh Abbey. "His personal character is almost perfect. High-minded, generous and hospitable to the extreme, he hardly had an enemy or a misunderstanding during the whole of a long and active career. He was the delight of society; for his conversation, though unpretending, kindly, and jovial, was filled with that union of old-world lore and acute and picturesque observation which renders his works so enchanting. There perhaps never was a man so totally free from the pettinesses and affectations to which men of letters are prone."

The narrative poems of Scott form an epoch in the history of modern literature. In their subjects, their versification, and their treatment, they were an innovation. The materials were derived from the legends and exploits of mediæval chivalry; and the persons were borrowed partly from history and partly from imagination. He seems to move with most freedom in that picturesque Border region with whose romantic legends he was so wonderfully familiar. The greater of these poems are, unquestionably, the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (254), *Marmion* (256-258) and the *Lady of the Lake* (259). According to Scott's own judgment, the interest of the *Lay* depends mainly upon the style, that of *Marmion* upon the descrip-

\* Robert Chambers, in the *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotchmen*, suggests that Scott "kept the *Waverley* secret with such pertinacious closeness" because "unwilling to be considered as an author writing for fortune, which he must have thought something degrading to the baronet of Abbotsford." The suggestion is the most plausible that has been made, and well accords with Scott's foolish notions concerning the peculiar dignity of titled gentlemen.

tions, that of the *Lady of the Lake* upon the incidents. The form adopted in all these works, though it may be remotely referred to a revival of the spirit of the ancient French and Anglo-Norman Trouvères, was more immediately suggested, as Scott himself has confessed, by the example of Coleridge, who in his *Christabel* gave him the keynote upon which he composed his vigorous and varied harmony. The plots of these poems are in general neither very probable, nor very logically constructed, but they allow the poet ample opportunities for striking situations and picturesque episodes. The characters are discriminated by broad and vigorous strokes, rather than by any attempt at moral analysis or strong delineation of passion. In his varied and intensely vivid descriptions of scenery, Scott sometimes indulges in a quaint but graceful vein of moralizing, in which he beautifully associates inanimate nature with the sentiments of the human heart. A charming instance of this may be found in the opening description of *Rokeby*.

The action of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* is drawn from the legends of Border war; and necromancy, the tourney, the raid, and the attack on a strong castle, are successively described with unabating fire and energy. The midnight expedition of Deloraine to the wizard's tomb in Melrose Abbey, the ordeal of battle, the alarm, the feast, and the penitential procession, are painted with the force and picturesqueness of real scenes. In *Marmion* the main action is loftier and more historical, and the catastrophe is made to coincide with the description of the great battle of Flodden. Here Scott gave earnest of powers in this department of painting hardly inferior to those of Homer himself. It is indeed "a fearful battle rendered you in music;" and the whole scene, from the rush and fury of the onset down to the least heraldic detail or minute trifle of armor and equipment, is delineated with the truth of an

eye-witness. In the *Lady of the Lake* he broke up new and fertile ground; he brought into contact the wild half-savage mountaineers of the Highlands and the refined and chivalrous court of James V. The exquisite scenery of Loch Katrine became, when invested by the magic of the descriptions, the chief object of the traveller's pilgrimage; and it is no exaggeration to say, as Macaulay has said, that the glamour of the great poet's genius has forever hallowed even the barbarous tribes whose manners are here invested with all the charms of fiction. In no other of his poems is that gallant spirit of chivalric bravery and courtesy which pervades Scott's poetry, as it animated his personal character, so powerfully manifested.

Though the tale of *Rokeby* contains many beautiful descriptions, and exhibits strenuous efforts to draw and contrast individual characters with force, the epoch—that of the Civil Wars of Charles the First's reign—was one in which Scott felt himself less at home than in his well-beloved feudal ages.

The last of the greater poems, *The Lord of the Isles*, went back to Scott's favorite epoch. The voyage of the hero-king, Robert Bruce, the scenes in the Castle of Artornish, the description of the savage and terrific desolation of the Western Highlands, show little diminution in his picturesque power. The Battle of Bannockburn reminds us of the hand that drew the field of Flodden. Scott's ardent patriotism must have found a special pleasure in delineating the great victory of his country's independence.

*The Vision of Don Roderick*, though based upon a striking and picturesque tradition, is principally a song of triumph over the recent defeat of the French arms in the Peninsula; but the moment he leaves the mediæval battle-field, Scott seems to lose half his power; in this poem, as in *Waterloo*, his combats are neither those of feudal knights

nor of modern soldiers, and there is painfully visible, throughout, a struggle to be emphatic and picturesque. Indeed it may be said that almost all poems made to order, and written to celebrate contemporary events, have a forced and artificial air.

If we apply to the long and splendid series of prose fictions known by the name of the *Waverley Novels*, a distribution such as was adopted in a former chapter for the purpose of giving a classification of Shakspeare's dramas, we shall obtain the following results: the novels are twenty-nine in number, of varied degrees of excellence. They may be divided into the two main classes of Historical, or such as derive their principal interest from the delineation of some real persons or events; and Personal, or those entirely or principally founded upon private life or family legend. According to this method of classification, we shall range seven works under Scottish history, seven under English, and three will belong to the Continental department; while the novels mainly assignable to the head of private life—sometimes, it is true, more or less connected, as in the cases of *Rob Roy* and *Red-gauntlet*, with historical events—are twelve in number. The latter class are for the most part of purely Scottish scenery and character. The following arrangement will assist the memory in recalling such a vast and varied cycle of works:—

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## I.—HISTORICAL.

I. SCOTTISH . . . *Waverley*. The Period of the Pretender's attempt in 1745.

*The Legend of Montrose*. The Civil War in the seventeenth century.

*Old Mortality*.—The Rebellion of the Covenanters.

*The Monastery,* } The deposition and imprisonment of Mary  
*The Abbot.* } Queen of Scots.

*The Fair Maid of Perth.* The Reign of Robert III.

+ *Castle Dangerous.* The time of the Black Douglas.

II. ENGLISH . . . (*Ivanhoe*) **(263)**. The return of Richard Cœur de Lion from the Holy Land.

*Kenilworth.* The reign of Elizabeth.

*The Fortunes of Nigel.* Reign of James I.

*Peveril of the Peak.* Reign of Charles II.; period of the pretended Catholic plot.

*Betrothed.* The wars of the Welsh Marches.

(*The Talisman*) The third Crusade: Richard Cœur de Lion. +

+ *Woodstock.* The Civil War and Commonwealth.

III. CONTINENTAL. *Quentin Durward.* Louis XI. and Charles the Bold.

*Anne of Geierstein.* The epoch of the battle of Nancy.

+ *Count Robert of Paris.* The Crusaders at Byzantium.

## II. PERSONAL.

*Guy Mannering.*

*The Antiquary.*

*Black Dwarf.*

*Rob Roy.*

*The Heart of Midlothian* **(262)**.

*The Bride of Lammermoor.*

*The Pirate.*

*St. Ronan's Well.*

*Red Gauntlet.*

*The Surgeon's Daughter.*

*The Two Drovers.*

*The Highland Widow.*

In this unequalled series of fictions, the author's power of bringing near and making palpable to us the remote and historical, whether of persons, places, or events, has something in common with that of Shakespeare, as shown in his historical dramas. "Scott was careless in the construction of his plots." He wrote with great rapidity, and aimed at picturesque effect rather than at logical coherency. His powerful imagination carried him away so vehemently, that the delight he must have felt in developing the humors and adventures of one of those inimitable persons he had invented, sometimes left him no space for the elaboration of the pre-arranged intrigue. His style, though always easy and animated, is far from being careful or elaborate. Scotticisms will be met with in almost every chapter. Description, whether of scenery, incident, or personal appearance, is very abundant in his works; but few of his readers will be found to complain of his luxuriance in this respect, for it has filled his pages with bright and vivid pictures. His sentiments are invariably pure, manly, and elevated; and the spirit of the true gentleman is seen as clearly in his deep sympathy with the virtues of the poor and humble, as in the knightly fervor with which he paints the loftier feelings of the educated classes. In the delineation of character, as well as in the painting of external nature, he faithfully reflects the surface. There is no profound analysis of passion in his novels. He simply sets before us so brightly, so vividly, all that is necessary to give a distinct idea, that his images remain in the memory.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

BYRON, MOORE, SHELLEY, KEATS, LEIGH HUNT, LANDOR,  
HOOD, BROWNING.

### LORD BYRON.

"Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair."—*T. B. Macaulay.*

"I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind. We met for an hour or two almost daily in Mr. Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. . . . His reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive, either in poetry or history. Having the advantage of him in that respect, and possessing a good competent share of such reading as is little read, I was sometimes able to put under his eye objects which had for him the interest of novelty."—*Walter Scott.*

"Byron's poetry is great—great—it makes him truly great; he has not so much greatness in himself."—*Thomas Campbell.*

"To this day English critics are unjust to him. . . . If ever there was a violent and madly sensitive soul, but incapable of being otherwise; ever agitated, but in an enclosure without issue; predisposed to poetry by its innate fire, but limited by its natural barriers to a single kind of poetry—it was Byron's."—*H. A. Taine.*

THE influence exerted by Byron on the taste and sentiment of Europe has not yet passed away, and, though far from being so pervading as it once was, it is not likely to be ever effaced. He called himself, in one of his poems, "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme;" and there is some similarity between the suddenness and splendor of his literary career, and the meteoric rise and domination of the First Bonaparte. They were both, in their respective departments, the offspring of revolution; and both, after reigning with absolute power for some time, were deposed from their supremacy. Their reigns will leave traces in the political, and in the literary history of the nine-

teenth century. **George Gordon, Lord Byron** (1788–1824) (**264–277**), was born in London, and was the son of an unprincipled profligate and of a Scottish heiress. His mother had a temper so passionate and uncontrolled that, in its capricious alternations of fondness and violence, she seemed insane. Her dowry was speedily dissipated by her worthless husband, and she, with her boy, was obliged to live for several years in comparative poverty. He was about eleven years old when the death of his grand-uncle, an eccentric and misanthropic recluse, made him heir-presumptive to the baronial title of one of the most ancient aristocratic houses in England. With the title, he inherited large, though embarrassed estates, and the noble picturesque residence of Newstead Abbey, near Nottingham. He was sent first to Harrow School, and afterwards to Trinity College, Cambridge. At college he became notorious for the irregularities of his conduct. He was a greedy though desultory reader; and his imagination was especially attracted to Oriental history and travels.

While at Cambridge, in his twentieth year, Byron made his first literary attempt, in the publication of a small volume of fugitive poems entitled *Hours of Idleness, by Lord Byron, a Minor*. An unfavorable criticism of this work in the *Edinburgh Review* threw him into a frenzy of rage. He instantly set about taking his revenge in the satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in which he involved in one common storm of invective, not only his enemies of the *Edinburgh Review*, but almost all the literary men of the day,—Walter Scott, Moore, and many others, from whom he had received no provocation whatever. He soon became ashamed of his unreasoning violence; tried, but vainly, to suppress the poem; and, in after life, became the friend and sincere admirer of some whom he had lampooned. Byron now went abroad to travel, and filled his mind with the picturesque life and scenery of Greece, Turkey, and the



East, accumulating those stores of character and description which he poured forth with such royal splendor in his poems. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* took the public by storm, and at once placed the young poet at the summit of social and literary popularity. "I awoke one morning," he says, "and found myself famous." These cantos were followed in rapid succession by *The Giaour*, (268, 269), *The Bride of Abydos* (270), *The Corsair* (271), and *Lara*. Scott had drawn his material from feudal and Scottish life; Byron broke up new ground in describing the manners, scenery, and wild passions of the East and of Greece—a region as picturesque as that of his rival, as well known to him by experience, and as new and fresh to the public he addressed. Returning to England in the full blaze of his dawning fame, the poet became the lion of the day. His life was passed in fashionable dissipation. He married Miss Milbanke, a lady of fortune; but the union was an unhappy one. In about a year Lady Byron suddenly quitted her husband. Her reasons for taking this step will ever remain a mystery. Deeply wounded by the scandal of this separation, the poet again left England; and thenceforth his life was passed uninterruptedly on the Continent, in Switzerland, in Italy, and in Greece, where he solaced his embittered spirit with misanthropical attacks upon all that his countrymen held sacred, and gradually plunged deeper and deeper into a slough of sensuality and vice. While at Geneva he produced the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* (273), *Manfred* (274), and *The Lament of Tasso*. Between 1818 and 1821 he was residing at Venice and Ravenna; and was writing *Mazeppa*, the first five cantos of *Don Juan*, and most of his tragedies, as *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Werner*, *Cain*, and *The Deformed Transformed*. In many of these poems the influence of Shelley's literary manner and philosophical tenets is traceable. At this time he was grossly dissipated,

and associated with persons of low character. In 1823 he determined to devote his fortune and his influence to the aid of the Greeks, then struggling for their independence. He arrived at Missolonghi at the beginning of 1824; where, after giving striking indications of his practical talents, as well as of his ardor and self-sacrifice, he died on the 19th of April of the same year, at the early age of thirty-six.

*Childe Harold*, his most remarkable poem, consists of a series of gloomy but intensely poetical monologues, put into the mouth of a jaded and misanthropic voluptuary, who seeks refuge from his misery in the contemplation of the lovely and historic scenes of travel. The first canto describes Portugal and Spain; the second carries the wanderer to Greece, Albania and the Aegean Archipelago; in the third, the finest and intensest of them all, Switzerland, Belgium and the Rhine, give opportunities not only for splendid pictures of the consummate beauty of nature, but also for musings on Napoleon, Voltaire, Rousseau and the great men whose renown has thrown a new glory over those enchanting scenes; in the fourth canto the reader is borne successively over the fairest parts of Italy—Venice, Ferrara, Florence, Rome, and Ravenna—and the immortal dead, and the master-pieces of painting and sculpture, are described to him with an intensity of feeling that had never before been shown in descriptive poetry.

The first two cantos are somewhat feeble and tame as compared with the strength and massive power of the two later, which are the productions of his more mature faculties. The third canto contains the magnificent description of the Battle of Waterloo, with bitter and melancholy but sublime musings on the vanity of military fame. The poem is written in the Spenserian stanza. In the beginning the poet makes an effort to give somewhat of the quaint and archaic character of the *Fairy Queen*; but he soon throws off the useless and embarrassing restraint. In intensity of

feeling, in richness and harmony of expression, and in an imposing tone of gloomy, sceptical, and misanthropic reflection, *Childe Harold* stands alone in our literature.

The romantic tales of Byron are all marked by similar peculiarities of thought and treatment, though they differ in the kind and degree of their respective excellences. *The Giaour* (268), *The Siege of Corinth*, *Mazeppa*, *Parisina*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* (273), and *The Bride of Abydos*, are written in that irregular and flowing versification which Scott brought into fashion; while *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *The Island*, are in the regular heroic measure. These poems are, in general, fragmentary. They are made up of intensely interesting moments of passion and action. Neither in these nor in any of his works does Byron show the least power of delineating *variety* of character. There are but two personages in all his poems—a man in whom unbridled passions have desolated the heart, and left it hard and impenetrable; a man contemptuous of his kind, sceptical and despairing, yet occasionally feeling the softer emotions with a singular intensity. The woman is the woman of the East—sensual, devoted, and loving, but loving with the unreasoning attachment of the lower animals. These elements of character, meagre and unnatural as they are, are however set before us with such power that the young and inexperienced reader invariably loses sight of their contradictions. In all these poems we meet with inimitable descriptions, tender, animated, or profound: thus the famous comparison of enslaved Greece to a corpse in *The Giaour*, the night-scene and the battle-scene in *The Corsair* and *Lara*, the eve of the storming of the city in *The Siege of Corinth*, and the fiery energy of the attack in the same poem, the exquisite opening lines in *Parisina*, besides a multitude of others, might be adduced to prove Byron's extraordinary genius in communicating to his pictures the coloring of his own feelings and character.

In *Beppo* and *The Vision of Judgment* Byron has ventured upon the gay, airy, and satirical. The former of these poems is not over-moral; but it is exquisitely playful and sparkling. The *Vision* is a severe attack upon Southey, and though somewhat ferocious and truculent, is exceedingly brilliant. Among the less commonly read of Byron's longer poems we may mention *The Age of Bronze*, a vehement satirical declamation; *The Curse of Minerva*, directed against the spoliation of the frieze of the Parthenon, by Lord Elgin; *The Lament of Tasso*, and *The Prophecy of Dante*, the latter written in the difficult *terza rima*, the first attempt of any English poet to employ that measure. *The Dream* is in some respects the most touching of Byron's minor works. It is the narrative, in the form of a vision, of his early sorrow for Mary Chaworth. There is hardly, in the whole range of literature, so tender, so lofty, and so condensed a life-drama as that narrated in these verses.

The dramatic works of Byron are in many respects unlike what might have been expected from the peculiar character of his genius. In form they are cold, severe, and lofty. Artful involution of intrigue they have not; and though singularly destitute of powerful passion, they are full of intense sentiment. The finest of them is *Manfred*, a poem consisting not of action represented in dialogue, but of a series of sublime soliloquies, in which the mysterious hero describes nature, and pours forth his despair and his self-pity. In this work, as well as in *Cain*, we see the expression of Byron's sceptical spirit, and the tone of half-melancholy, half-mocking misanthropy, which was in him partly sincere and partly put on for effect. The more exclusively historical pieces—*Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*—are derived from Venetian annals; but in neither of them has Byron clothed the events with living reality. There is in these dramas a complete failure in variety of character; and the interest is concentrated on the obstinate harping of the

principal personages upon one topic—their own wrongs and humiliations. In *Sardanapalus* the remoteness of the epoch chosen, and our total ignorance of the interior life of those times, remove the story into the region of fiction. *Werner*, a piece of domestic interest, is bodily borrowed, as far as regards its incidents, and even much of its dialogue, from the Hungarian's Story in Miss Lee's *Canterbury Tales*; indeed, Byron's share in its composition extends little farther than the cutting up of Miss Lee's prose into tolerably regular lines.

*Don Juan* is the longest, the most singular, and in some respects the most characteristic, of Byron's poems. It is, indeed, one of the most significant productions of the age of revolution and scepticism which preceded its appearance. The outline of the story is the old Spanish legend of *Don Juan de Tenorio*, upon which have been founded so many dramatic works, among the rest the *Festin de Pierre* of Molière and the immortal opera of Mozart. The fundamental idea of the atheist and voluptuary, enabled Byron to carry his hero through various adventures, serious and comic, to exhibit his unrivalled power of description, and left him unfettered by any necessities of time and place. Even in its unfinished state, it consists of sixteen cantos, and there is no reason why it should not have been indefinitely extended. It was the author's intention to bring his hero's adventures to a regular termination, but so desultory a series of incidents has no real coherency. The merits of this extraordinary poem are its richness of ideas, thoughts, and images; its witty allusion and sarcastic reflection; and above all, its frequent and easy transitions. The morality is throughout very low and selfish; but, in spite of much superficial flippancy, this poem contains an immense mass of profound and melancholy satire; and in a very large number of serious passages Byron has shown a power, picturesqueness, and pathos not surpassed by other authors.

"The genius of Lord Byron is one of the most remarkable in our literature for originality, versatility, and energy. It is true that his quick sense of beauty made him a mimic of other poets; it is true that as the wealth of his own resources raised him above the suspicion of unfair copying, he never scrupled to imitate whatever he most admired; but it is no less true that he is on the whole one of the most original writers of his age. His versatility is perhaps less obvious. The monotony of his motives and of his characters strikes every reader; but characters and tone apart, his style and imagery and sentiments are endlessly diversified, nor has he treated a single subject in which he has not excelled. His energy, however, is his most striking quality; 'thoughts that breathe, and words that burn' are the common staple of his poetry. He is everywhere impressive, not only in passages, but through the whole body and tissue of his compositions.

"With all this we cannot but concur in Lord Jeffrey's judgment: '*the general tendency of Lord Byron's writings we believe to be in the highest degree pernicious; though his poems abound in sentiments of great dignity and tenderness, as well as in passages of infinite sublimity and beauty; it is their tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue, and to make all enthusiasm and consistency of affection ridiculous.*' His sarcasm blasts alike the weeds of hypocrisy and cant, and the flowers of faith and of holiest affections. 'His plan of blending in one and the same character lofty superiority and contempt for commonplace virtue, heroism and sensuality, great intellectual power and a mocking profane spirit, is as unnatural as it is mischievous.' " \*

For discussions of Byron and his works, see Moore's *Life of Byron*; *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. XXVII.; *The North American Review*, Vols. V., XIII., XX., and LX.; *The British Essayists*—Jeffrey; E. P. Whipple's *Essays*, Vol. I.; and Taine's *English Literature*.

**Thomas Moore** (1779–1852), the personal friend and biographer of Byron, is associated in literature with Byron, Shelley and Scott, men whom he survived for a quarter of a century. This is accounted for by the fact that his best works were written early in the century. He was an Irishman, born in Dublin, and received an education such as was called for by his extraordinary youthful talents. Being a Catholic, many of the avenues to public distinction were then closed to him by the invidious laws that oppressed his country and his religion. After distinguishing himself at the University of Dublin he passed over to London, nominally with the intention of studying law in the Temple, but he soon began his long and brilliant career as a poet. He first appeared as the translator of the *Odes of Anacreon*. The work, published by subscription, and dedicated to the Prince Regent, immediately introduced Moore into gay and fashionable life. He had, both in his personal and poetical character, everything calculated to make him the darling of society, great conversational talents, an agreeable voice, and a degree of musical skill that enabled him to give enchanting effect to his tender, voluptuous or patriotic songs. During his whole life he was the spoiled child of popularity. In 1804 he obtained a small government post in the island of Bermuda. His visit to America and the Antilles drew from him some of the most sparkling of his early poems. Neglecting the duties of his station, he became responsible, by the dishonesty of a subordinate, for a considerable sum of public money. This claim of the Crown he afterwards discharged by his literary labor; and nearly the whole of his long life was devoted to the production of a rapid succession of compositions, both in prose and verse, some of them obtaining an immense, and all a respectable success. As an Irishman and Catholic, Moore's sentiments naturally supplied the biting and yet pleasant sarcasm found in his political pasquinades. He spent the latter part of his life in a cottage near Bowood, the residence of the Marquess of Lansdowne, whose friendship he had won.

Moore's poetical writings consist chiefly of lyrics, serious and comic, the most celebrated collection among them being the *Irish Melodies*. The version of *Anacreon* is far too brilliant and ornamental in its language to give a correct idea of the manner of the Greek poet. In his juvenile poems, as well as in the collection published under the pseudonym of *Thomas Little*, in the produc-

tions suggested by his visit to America and the West Indies, and in the *Odes and Epistles*, we see an ingenious and ever-watchful invention, and also a strongly voluptuous tendency of sentiment, sometimes carried beyond the bounds of good taste and morality.

The *Irish Melodies*, a collection of about one hundred and twenty-five songs (279-282), were composed in order to furnish appropriate words to a great number of beautiful national airs, some of great antiquity, which had been degraded by becoming gradually associated with lines often vulgar and not always decent. Patriotism, love, and conviviality form the subject-matter of these charming lyrics; their versification has never been surpassed for melody and neatness; the language is always clear, appropriate, and concise, and sometimes reaches a high degree of majesty, vigor, or tenderness. Though Moore is destitute of the intense sincerity of Burns, yet like Burns he appeals to the universal sentiments of his countrymen, and his popularity is proportionally great. "Burns and Moore stand side by side as the lyrists of two kindred nations. But the works of the latter, polished and surpassingly sweet as they are, have something of the drawing-room sheen about them, which does not find its way to the heart so readily as the simple grace of the unconventional Ayrshire peasant. The Muse of the Irish lawyer is crowned with a circlet of shining gems; the Muse of the Scottish peasant wears a garland of sweet field-flowers."\*

Moore's *National Airs* were intended to be set to tunes peculiar to various countries; they exhibit the same musical sensibility and the same neatness of expression as the *Irish Melodies*; but they are naturally inferior to them in intensity of patriotic feeling. A small collection of *Sacred Songs* affords frequent examples of the merits of Moore's lyrical genius. All these collections exhibit a high polish, an almost fastidious finish of style, making them models of perfection in their peculiar manner.

The political squibs of Moore were directed against the Tory party in general, and were showered with peculiar vivacity and stinging effect upon the Regent, afterwards George IV., and upon all who were opposed to the granting of any relaxation to the Irish Catholics. His *Odes on Cash, Corn, and Catholics*, his *Fables for the Holy Alliance*, show an inexhaustible invention of quaint and ingenious ideas, and the power of bringing the most remote allusions to bear upon the person or thing selected for attack. Some of the



most celebrated of these brilliant pasquinades were combined into a story, as for example *The Fudge Family in Paris*, purporting to be a series of letters written from France just at the period of the Restoration of the Bourbons. Nothing can be more animated, brilliant, and humorous than the description of the motley life and the giddy whirl of amusement in Paris at that memorable moment; and the whole is seasoned with such a multitude of personal and political allusions, that *The Fudge Family* will probably ever retain its popularity, as a social and political sketch of a most interesting episode in modern European history.

The longer and more ambitious poems of Moore are *Lalla Rookh* and the *Loves of the Angels*, the former being immeasurably the better, both in the interest of the story and in the power of its treatment. The plan of *Lalla Rookh* is original; it consists of a little prose love-tale, describing the journey of a beautiful Oriental princess from Delhi to Bucharra, where she is to meet her betrothed, the king of the latter country. The prose portion of the work is inimitably beautiful; the whole style is sparkling with Oriental gems, and perfumed as with Oriental musk and roses; and the very profusion of brilliancy and of voluptuous languor, which in another kind of composition might be regarded as meretricious, only adds to the Oriental effect. The story forms a setting to four poems: *The Veiled Prophet*, *The Fire Worshippers*, *Paradise and the Peri* (278), and *The Light of the Harem*; all, of course, of an Eastern character, and the first two in some degree historical. The first, written in the rhymed heroic couplet, is the longest and most ambitious, while the others are composed in that irregular animated versification, brought into fashion by Walter Scott and Byron. The *Loves of the Angels* is inferior to *Lalla Rookh*, not only in the impracticable nature of its subject, but also in the monotony of its treatment.

The chief prose works of Moore are the three biographies of Sheridan, Byron, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and the tale of *The Epicurean*. The last, a narrative of the first ages of Christianity, describes the conversion of a young Athenian philosopher, who travels into Egypt, and is initiated into the mysterious worship of Isis. Moore's biographies, especially that of Byron, are of great value. His memoir of his friend and fellow-poet is the best that has yet appeared. It is particularly valuable from consisting, as

far as possible, of extracts from Byron's own journals and correspondence, so that the subject of the biography is delineated in his own words, Moore furnishing the arrangement and the connecting matter.

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792-1822) was of a wealthy family, and was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in Sussex. At Eton his sensitive mind was shocked by the sight of boyish tyranny; and he went to Oxford full of abhorrence for the cruelty and bigotry which he fancied pervaded all the relations of civilized life. An eager and desultory student, he rapidly filled his mind with the arguments against Christianity; and having published a tract avowing atheistic principles, he was expelled from the University. This scandal, together with his marriage to a beautiful girl, his inferior in rank, caused him to be renounced by his family. After a few years his wife left him, and subsequently terminated her life by suicide. He then married Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and having induced his family to make him a considerable annual allowance, he was relieved from pecuniary difficulties. The delicate state of his health rendered it advisable that he should leave England for a warmer climate, and the remainder of his life was passed abroad, with only one short interruption. In Switzerland he became acquainted with Byron, upon whom he exerted a powerful influence. He afterwards migrated to Italy, where he kept up an intimate companionship with Byron, still continuing to pour forth his strange and enchanting poetry. He resided principally at Rome, and composed there many of his finest productions. His death was early and tragic. Boating had always been a passion with him. As he was returning in a small yacht from Leghorn, in company with a friend and a single sailor, his vessel was caught in a squall, in the Gulf of Spezzia, and went down with all on board. His body was washed ashore some days afterwards, and in accordance with the quarantine laws of that locality was burned. Byron deposited the ashes in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome.

Shelley, both as a poet and as a man, was a dreamer, a visionary; his mind was filled with glorious but unreal phantoms of the perfectibility of mankind. The very intensity of his sympathy with his kind clouded his reason; and he fell into the common error of all enthusiasts, of supposing that, if the present organization of

society were swept away, a millennium of virtue and happiness must ensue. As a poet he was gifted with genius of a very high order, with richness and fertility of imagination, an intense fire and energy in the reproduction of what he conceived, and a command over all the resources of metrical harmony such as no English poet has surpassed. His career commences with *Queen Mab*, written by the poet when but eighteen years old, a wild phantasmagoria of beautiful description and fervent declamation. The defect of the poem, and indeed of many of Shelley's other compositions, is a vagueness of meaning often becoming absolutely unintelligible.

The finest and most distinct of his longer poems is *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*. In its blank verse he depicts the sufferings of such a character as his own,—a being of the warmest sympathies, and of the loftiest aspirations, driven into solitude and despair by the ingratitude of his kind, who are incapable of understanding and sympathizing with his aims. Its descriptions are beautiful: woodland and river scenery are painted with a wealth of tropical luxuriance that places Shelley in the foremost rank among pictorial poets. *The Revolt of Islam*, *Hellas*, and *The Witch of Atlas*, are violent invectives against kingcraft, priestcraft, religion, and marriage, alternating with airy and exquisite pictures of scenes and beings of superhuman and unearthly splendor. The defect of these poems is the extreme obscurity of their general drift. Although particular objects stand out with the vividness and splendor of reality, and are lighted up with a dazzling glow of imagination, the effect of the whole is singularly vague and uncertain.

Two important works of Shelley are dramatic in form—*Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*. The *Prometheus* is one of the wildest and most unintelligible of all his writings; still it contains numberless passages of the highest beauty and sublimity. It breathes a fierce hostility to social systems, and intense love for humanity in the abstract. Many of the descriptive passages are sublime; and noble bursts of lyric harmony alternate with the wildest personifications and the strongest invective. *The Cenci* is founded on the famous crime of Beatrice di Cenci. Driven to parricide by the diabolical wickedness of her father, she suffered the penalty of death at Rome. In spite of several powerful and striking scenes, the piece is of a morbid and unpleasing character, though the language is vigorous and masculine.

Shelley had a desperate hostility to marriage; and his narrative poem of *Rosalind and Helen* is an elaborate plea against that institution. In the poem of *Adonais* he has given us a touching lament on the early death of Keats, whose short career gave such a noble foretaste of poetical genius as would have made him one of the greatest writers of his age. One of the most imaginative, and at the same time one of the obscurest, of Shelley's poems is *The Sensitive Plant*. It combines the qualities of mystery and fancifulness to the highest degree, perpetually stimulating the reader with a desire to penetrate the meaning symbolized in the luxuriant description of the garden and the plant. Many of his detached lyrics are of inexpressible beauty. The *Ode to a Skylark* (283) breathes the very rapture of the bird's soaring song. Wild and picturesque imagery abounds in the poem of *The Cloud*.

John Keats (1796-1821) was born in Moorfields, London, and, in his fifteenth year, was apprenticed to a surgeon. During his apprenticeship he devoted most of his time to poetry, and in 1817 he published a juvenile volume. His long poem, *Endymion*, followed in 1818 (289). It was severely censured by *The Quarterly Review*, an attack erroneously described as the cause of his death. He had a constitutional tendency to consumption, which would have developed itself under any circumstances. For the recovery of his health he went to Rome, where he died. In the previous year he had published another volume of poems, and a fragment of his remarkable poem entitled *Hyperion* (287).

It was the misfortune of Keats to be either extravagantly praised or unmercifully condemned. What is most remarkable in his works is the wonderful profusion of figurative language, often exquisitely beautiful and luxuriant, but sometimes fantastical and far-fetched. One word, one image, one rhyme suggests another, till we lose sight of the original idea, smothered in its own luxuriance. Keats deserves high praise for one very original merit: he has treated the classical mythology in a way absolutely new, representing the Pagan deities not as mere abstractions of art, nor as mere creatures of popular belief, but giving them passions and affections like our own, though highly purified and idealized. In *Hyperion*, in the *Ode to Pan* (which appears in "Endymion"), in the *Verses on a Grecian Urn* (288), we find a strain of classic imagery, combined

with a perception of natural loveliness inexpressibly rich and delicate. Keats was a true poet. If we consider his extreme youth and delicate health, his solitary and interesting self-instruction, the severity of the attacks made upon him by hostile and powerful critics, and, above all, the original richness and picturesqueness of his conceptions and imagery, even when they run to waste, he appears to be one of the greatest of young poets.

To Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) was born at Glasgow, and was educated at the University in that city, where he distinguished himself by his translations from the Greek poets. In his twenty-second year, he published his *Pleasures of Hope* (290), and was encouraged by having it received with hearty enthusiasm. Shortly afterwards he travelled abroad, where the warlike scenes he witnessed, and the battle-fields he visited, suggested several noble lyrics. To the seventh edition of *The Pleasures of Hope*, published in 1802, were added the verses on the battle of *Hohenlinden* (293), *Ye Mariners of England* (292), the most popular of his songs, and (*Lochiel's Warning*). In the following year he settled in London, married, and commenced in earnest the pursuit of literature as a profession. In 1843 he retired to Boulogne, where he died in the following year. His body was returned to England and interred in Westminster Abbey.

In the circle of poets with Byron, Shelley, and Keats, outliving them by many years, the names of Leigh Hunt and Walter Savage Landor must be mentioned.

James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was born at Southgate, Middlesex, and received his education at Christ's Hospital. In 1805 he joined his brother in editing a paper called *The News*, and shortly afterwards established *The Examiner*. A conviction for libel on the Prince Regent detained him in prison for two years. Soon after leaving prison he published the *Story of Rimini*, an Italian tale in verse (1816), containing some exquisite poetry. About 1818 he started *The Indicator*, a weekly paper, in imitation of *The Spectator*; and in 1822 he went to Italy, to assist Lord Byron and Shelley in their projected paper called *The Liberal*. Shelley died soon after Hunt's arrival in Italy; and though Hunt was kindly received by Byron, and lived for a time in his house, there was no congeniality between them. Returning to England, he continued to write for periodicals, and published various poems. His

poetry is graceful, sprightly, and full of fancy. Although not possessing much soul and emotion, here and there his verse is lit up with wit, or glows with tenderness and grace. His prose writings consist of essays, collected under the titles of *The Indicator* and *The Companion*; *Sir Ralph Esther*, a novel; *The Old Court Suburb*; his lives of *Wycherley*, *Congreve*, *Vanbrugh*, and *Farquhar*, prefixed to his edition of their dramatic writings, and many others.

The father of **Walter Savage Landor** (1775-1864) was a gentleman of wealth, residing in Warwickshire. The son entered Rugby at an early age, and thence proceeded to Trinity College, Oxford; but he left the University without a degree. As a poet he stands with Leigh Hunt between the age of Scott and Byron and the age of Tennyson and Browning. In 1795 his first work—a volume of poems—appeared, followed early in the present century by a translation into Latin of *Gebir*, one of his own English poems. Landor had facility in classical composition, and he appeared to have the power of transporting himself into the times and sentiments of Greece and Rome. This is still more clearly seen in the *Heroic Idyls* in Latin verse; and the reproduction of Greek thought in *The Hellenics* is one of the most successful attempts of its kind. Shortly after the death of his father, the poet took up his abode on the Continent, where he resided during the rest of his life, making occasional visits to his native country. The republican spirit which led him to take part as a volunteer in the Spanish rising of 1808 continued to burn fiercely to the last. He even went so far as to defend tyrannicide, and boldly offered a pension to the widow of any one who would murder a despot. Between 1820 and 1830 he was engaged upon his greatest work, *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen*. This was followed in 1831 by *Poems, Letters by a Conservative, Satire on Satirists* (1836), *Pentameron and Pentalogue* (1837), and a long series in prose and poetry, of which the chief are *The Hellenics Enlarged and Completed*, *Dry Sticks Fugoted*, and *The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*. He died at Florence, an exile from his country, misunderstood by the majority of his countrymen, but highly appreciated by those who could rightly estimate the works he has left.

**Thomas Hood** (1799-1845) has unfortunately been regarded only as a humorist; but "pathos, sensibility, indignation against wrong, enthusiasm for human improvement—all these were his."

"His pen touched alike the springs of laughter and the sources of tears." He was associated with the brilliant circle who then contributed to *The London Magazine*; among whom were Lamb, Hazlitt, the Smiths, and De Quincey. His magazine articles were followed by *Whims and Oddities*. Hood became at once a popular writer; but in the midst of his success a business house failed, involving him in its losses. The poet, disdaining to seek the aid of bankruptcy, emulated the example of Scott, and determined by the economy of a life in Germany to pay off the debt thus involuntarily contracted. In 1835 the family took up their residence in Coblenz; from thence removed to Ostend (1837); and returned to London in 1840. He was editor of the *New Monthly* from 1841 until 1843, when the first number of his own Magazine was issued. A pension was obtained for him in 1844; and he died in the following year.

Hood was not a creative genius. He has given little indication of the highest imaginative faculty; but his fancy was delicate, and full of graceful play. He possessed in a remarkable degree the power of perceiving the ridiculous and the odd. His words seemed to break up into the queerest syllables. His wit was caustic, and yet it bore with itself its remedy. It was never coarse. An impurity even in suggestion cannot be found in Hood's pages. With the humor was associated a tender pathos. *The Death-bed* (323) is one of the most affecting little poems in our language, and is equalled only by another of his ballads entitled *Love's Eclipse*. Amongst his larger works, the (*Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*) and *Hero and Leander*, are the most elaborate. The descriptive parts in both are full of careful observation of nature, and most musical expression of her beauties. The best known of his poems are *The Bridge of Sighs* (322), *Eugene Aram*, and the (*Song of the Shirt*). In them the comic element is entirely wanting. His poems usually have a blending of humor and of pathos; and in their humor there is an earnest purpose. "He tempts men to laugh, and then leads them to pity and relieve."

The worthiest poet among women is **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1809-1861). She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of London, and by good fortune received what has been allowed to comparatively few of her sex, a good education. In the Latin and Greek literature she was well versed. The delicacy of her health prevented her from doing the toilsome work of the most laborious

Bridge of Sighs. (Brooklyne)

students; yet her acquisitions were so great that in her youth she was as famous for her learning as for her genius. Illness did not keep her from books. By a varied and extensive course of reading, and by her meditation, she prepared herself for her place among the poets. Her first acknowledged work was a translation of the *Prometheus Bound*, published in 1833. Next appeared a collection of poems in 1844, establishing her reputation as the strongest, most high-toned and most melodious of female poets. In 1846 she was married to Robert Browning, and went with him to Italy for the improvement of her health. From that time her sympathies with Italian aspirations were so intense that they color nearly all of her writings. Her *Casa Guidi Windows* gives her impressions of what she saw of Italian life from her home, the Casa Guido, in Florence. Her greatest work, and in the estimation of some critics the noblest poem of the present century, is (*Aurora Leigh*). This she herself pronounces "the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have entered." In 1856 she left England for the last time, dying at Florence in 1861.

This woman of deep emotion, of high-toned thought, of devout spirit, with soul strong enough to have filled the body of a Joan of Arc, shut in her darkened chamber, reading "almost every book worth reading in almost every language," mingling with a few friends, her heart going forth in sympathy with the wretched and down-trodden, gathered up her strength, and put her soul into her verse, now with all the passion of *Aurora Leigh*, and now in the tenderer sonnets full of pathos and love. It is not to be wondered at, that some of her writing has been called *spasmodic*. Mrs. Browning has not the calm, unfailing flow of thought and feeling found in her only modern superior in England, the Laureate. But the woman rises to heights on which the man has never stood, and finds depths which he has never fathomed. Her style is therefore often rugged, unfinished, and at times utterly without rhythm.

The sadness pervading all the writings of Mrs. Browning is what might be expected from such a life as hers. Her ill health, the sudden loss of her younger brother, the long-continued confinement in that chamber where no sunbeam ever cheered, must all have deepened the sorrow in which she ever dwelt. Her verse is therefore but rarely sportive. She deals sometimes in satire, but satire is always sad. Her own idea of the poet's work seems to bear this



view: "Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry, nor leisure for the hour of the poet." From such a view of poetry and life, we cannot wonder at the moral purpose found in all her writing.

**Mrs. Felicia Dorothea Hemans** (1793-1835), whose maiden name was Browne, has written poems that are extensively read. Her subjects find a ready admission to the hearts of all classes. The style is graceful, but presenting, as Scott said, "too many flowers for the fruit." There is little intellectual or emotional force about her poetry, and the greater part of it will soon be forgotten. A few of the smaller pieces will perhaps remain as English gems, such as *The Graves of a Household*, and the *Homes of England*.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE LAKE SCHOOL—WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE AND SOUTHEY

#### WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

"Him who uttered nothing base."—*Alfred Tennyson.*

"I do not know a man more to be venerated for uprightness of heart and loftiness of genius."—*Walter Scott.*

"To feel for the first time a communion with his mind, is to discover loftier faculties in our own."—*Thomas N. Talfourd.*

"Whatever the world may think of me or of my poetry is now of little consequence; but one thing is a comfort of my old age, that none of my works written since the days of my early youth, contains a line which I should wish to blot out because it panders to the baser passions of our nature. This is a comfort to me; I can do no mischief by my works when I am gone."—*William Wordsworth.*

**William Wordsworth** (1770–1850), the founder of the so-called Lake School of poetry, was born at Cockermouth, in the north of England (294–300). He was left an orphan very early in life. In his ninth year he was sent to a school at Hawkshead, in the most picturesque district of Lancashire, where his love for the beauties of creation was rapidly developed. After taking his degree at Cambridge in 1791, he went to France, and eagerly embraced the ideas of the wildest champions of liberty in that country. His political sentiments, however, became gradually modified, till in later life they settled down into steady conservatism in all questions of church and state. In 1793 he published two little poems, *An Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*. Their metre and language are of the school of Pope; but they are the work of a promising pupil, and not of a master. In the following year he completed the story of *Salisbury Plain, or, Guilt and Sorrow*. In regard to time it is separated from the *Descriptive Sketches* by a span, but in merit they are parted by a gulf. He had ceased to write in the

train of Pope; and composed in the stanza of his later favorite, Spenser. There is an exquisite simplicity and polish in the language. In his twenty-sixth year, just as he was finding it necessary to enter some regular business for the purpose of earning a livelihood, he found himself placed in what was affluence to him, by receiving a legacy of £900, with the request that he would devote himself to literary work. Thoughts of the law, and attempts to earn money by writing for newspapers were abandoned. He settled with his sister in a quiet country place in Somersetshire, and began his long devotion to the muse. His second experiment was the tragedy of *The Borderers*, a work considered as an unqualified failure when it first appeared. In 1797 Coleridge went to live in the neighborhood, and formed a close friendship with Wordsworth and his sister. The following year they started on a tour in Germany. To furnish funds for the journey they published a volume together, entitled *Lyrical Ballads*. The first poem was Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, and the other pieces were by Wordsworth. Of these, three or four were in Wordsworth's finest manner; but they did not save his name from ridicule and censure.

Returning to England, Wordsworth and his sister settled at Grasmere, in the Lake District. Coleridge and Southey resided near them. From this fact they came to be spoken of as the Lake School. The name, originally applied contemptuously, came to be the distinguishing title of these friends. Wordsworth now set himself to work to inculcate his peculiar views of poetry. Not disheartened by the unpopularity of his first attempt, he promptly issued a new edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, adding thirty-seven pieces to the original collection. At this time he was working on a biographical poem, *The Prelude*, published a half century after its composition.

A debt of £8500 due to his father at the time of his death, was paid to the poet in 1802. This increase of his fortune enabled him to marry. In 1807 he published two new volumes of *Poems*, containing the *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle*, and many more of his choicest pieces. Here appeared his first sonnets, and several of them are still ranked among his happiest efforts. Wordsworth's next publication was in prose. His indignation arose at the grasping tyranny of Napoleon; and in 1809 he put forth a pamphlet against the Convention of Cintra. The sentiments were spirit-

stirring, but the manner of conveying them was not, and his protest passed unheeded. His great work, *The Excursion*, appeared in 1814. This is a fragment of a projected great moral epic, discussing and solving the mightiest questions concerning God, nature, and man, our moral constitution, our duties, and our hopes. Its dramatic interest is exceedingly small; its structure is very faulty; and the characters represented in it are devoid of life and probability. On the other hand, so sublime are the subjects discussed, so lofty is their tone, and so deep a glow of humanity is perceptible throughout, that no honest reader can study this grand composition without ever-increasing reverence and delight.

*The White Doe of Rylstone*, published in 1815, is Wordsworth's only narrative poem of any length. The incidents are of a simple and mournful kind. *Peter Bell* was published in 1819, and was received with a shout of ridicule. The poet stated in the dedication that the work had been completed twenty years, and that he had continued correcting it in the interval to render it worthy of a permanent place in our national literature. It is meant to be serious, and is certainly not facetious, but there is so much farcical absurdity of detail and language that the mind is revolted. Between 1830 and 1840 the flood which floated him into favor rose to its height. Scott and Byron had in succession entranced the world. They had now withdrawn, and no third king arose to demand homage. It was in the lull that the less thrilling notes of the Lake bard obtained a hearing. It was during this time that he published his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* and *Yarrow Revisited*; and in 1842 he brought forth a complete collection of his poems. His fame was now firmly established. On the death of Southey in 1843 he was made Poet Laureate. He died on April 23, 1850, when he had just completed his eightieth year.

The poetry of Wordsworth has passed through two phases of criticism; in the first his defects were chiefly noted, and in the second his merits. We have arrived at the third era, when the majority of readers are just to both. A fair estimate of Wordsworth's poetry is given by an acute writer in the *Quarterly Review* :\* "It is constantly asserted that he effected a reform in the language of poetry, that he found the public bigoted to a vicious and flow-

\* Vol. XCII., p. 233, seq.

ery diction, which seemed to mean a great deal and really meant nothing, and that he led them back to sense and simplicity. The claim appears to us to be a fanciful assumption, refuted by the facts of literary history. Feebler poetasters were no doubt read when Wordsworth began to write than would now command an audience, however small; but they had no real hold upon the public, and Cowper was the only popular bard of the day. His masculine and unadorned English was relished in every cultivated circle in the land, and Wordsworth was the child and not the father of a reaction, which, after all, has been greatly exaggerated. Goldsmith was the most celebrated of Cowper's immediate predecessors, and it will not be pretended that *The Deserted Village* and *The Traveller* are among the specimens of inane phraseology. Burns had died before Wordsworth had attracted notice. The wonderful Peasant's performances were admired by none more than by Wordsworth himself: were they not already far more popular than the Lake-poet's have ever been—or ever will be? . . . . Whatever influence Wordsworth may have exercised on poetic style, be it great or small, was by deviating in practice from the principles of composition for which he contended. Both his theory, and the poems which illustrate it, continue to this hour to be all but universally condemned. He resolved to write as the lower orders talked; and though where the poor are the speakers it would be in accordance with strict dramatic propriety, the system would not be tolerated in serious poetry. Wordsworth's rule did not stop at the wording of dialogues. He maintained that the colloquial language of rustics was the most philosophical and enduring which the dictionary affords, and the fittest for verse of every description. . . . . When his finest verse is brought to the test of his principle, they agree no better than light and darkness. Here is his way of describing the effects of the pealing organ in King's College Chapel, with its 'self-poised roof, scooped into ten thousand cells:'

But from the arms of silence—list! O list—  
The music bursteth into second life;  
The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed  
With sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife!

This is to write like a splendid poet, but it is not to write as rustics talk. A second canon laid down by Wordsworth was, that poetic diction is, or ought to be, in all respects the same with the

language of prose; and as prose has a wide range, and numbers among its triumphs such luxuriant eloquence as that of Jeremy Taylor, the principle, if just, would be no less available for the advocates of ornamental verse than for the defence of the homely style of the *Lyrical Ballads*. But the proposition is certainly too broadly stated; and, though the argument holds good for the adversary, because the phraseology which is not too rich for prose can never be considered too tawdry for poetry, yet it will not warrant the conclusions of Wordsworth, that poetry should never rise above prose, or disdain to descend to its lowest level."

The following references are to interesting discussions of Wordsworth and his poetry: Reed's *British Poets*, Lecture XV.; Wilson, in the *British Essayists*; *The North American Review*, Vol. C., p. 508; Craik's *English Literature and Language*, Vol. II., p. 453; De Quincey's *Essays on the Poets*; Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XIV.; Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*; Jeffrey, in the *British Essayists*; Talfourd, in the *British Essayists*; Taine's *English Literature*, Vol. II.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was born at Ottery-St.-Mary, in Devonshire, and was educated at Christ's Hospital; whence he proceeded to Jesus College, Cambridge (301-307). Leaving the University in his second year he enlisted in the Dragoons, under the assumed name of Comberbacke. One of the officers, learning his real history, communicated with his friends, by whom his discharge was at once effected. After forming a wild scheme with Southey, for a model republic to be known as the "Pantisocracy," and to be located on the banks of the Susquehanna, he abandoned it for want of funds, and then turned his attention to literature. He had previously written the first act of the *Fall of Robespierre*. In 1795 he married Miss Sarah Fricker, a sister of Southey's wife, and during the first three years after his marriage he lived in Wordsworth's neighborhood. His share in the celebrated *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798, has been already mentioned. At this period his tragedy, *Remorse*, was written. In 1798 he visited Germany, where he studied the language and literature. After his return he took up his abode in the Lake District, near Wordsworth and Southey. He subsequently spent some time in Malta. In 1810 he quitted the Lakes, leaving his wife and children wholly dependent upon Southey,—an illustration of his indifference to personal and pecuniary obligations. He took up his residence

in London, finding a home in the house of Mr. Gillman at Highgate, where he died, July 25, 1834.

Carlyle paints Coleridge's portrait in these words:—"Brow and head were round and of massive weight; but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden-walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in cork-screw fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man."

The literary character of Coleridge resembles some vast but unfinished palace; all is gigantic, beautiful, and rich, but nothing is complete, nothing compact. He was all his days, from his youth to his death, laboring, meditating, projecting; and yet all that he has left us bears marks of imperfection. His mind was dreamy, his genius was multiform, many-sided, and for this reason, perhaps, could not at once seize upon the right point of view. No man, probably, ever thought more, and more intensely, than Coleridge; few ever possessed a vaster treasury of learning and knowledge; and yet how little has he given us, or rather how few of his works are in any way worthy of the undoubted majesty of his genius! Materials, indeed, he has left us in enormous quantity—a store of thoughts and principles, golden masses of reason, either painfully sifted from the rubbish of obscure and forgotten authors, or dug up from the rich depths of his own mind; but these are still in the state of raw materials, or only partially worked.

Coleridge began his life as a Unitarian and a republican; but he ultimately became from conviction a most sincere adherent to the doctrines of the Anglican church, and an enthusiastic defender of a constitutional monarchy. Though his best lyrics, that *On the Departing Year*, and *Sunrise in the Valley of Chamouni* (302) are somewhat injured by their air of effort, they are works of singular richness and exquisite language. In his translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, Coleridge was most successful. With almost all readers

it will for ever have the charm of an original work. Indeed, many beautiful parts of the translation are exclusively the property of the English poet, who used a manuscript copy of the German text before its publication by the author. That Coleridge had no power of true dramatic creation is seen in his tragedy of *Remorse*; for in it he neither excites curiosity nor moves any strong degree of pity. He was, however, a consummate critic of the dramatic productions of others. He first showed that the creator of *Hamlet* and *Othello* was not only the greatest genius, but also the most wonderful artist, that ever existed. He was the first to make some approach to the discovery of those laws governing the evolutions of the Shakespearean drama—the first to give us some faint idea of the length, and breadth, and depth, of that sea of truth and beauty.

Coleridge's popular poems, *The Ancient Mariner*, (304), *Christabel*, and the fragment called *Kubla Khan* (303), are of a mystic, unreal character: indeed, Coleridge asserted that the last was actually composed in a dream—an affirmation that may well be believed, for it is a thousand times more unintelligible than the general run of dreams. Like everything that he ever wrote, the versification is exquisite. His language puts on every form, it expresses every sound; he almost writes to the eye and to the ear. In point of completeness, exquisite harmony of feeling, and unsurpassable grace of imagery and language, he has left nothing superior to the charming little poem entitled *Love, or Genevieve*.

Coleridge takes rank also as a philosopher. *The Friend*, the *Lay Sermons*, the *Aids to Reflection*, and the *Church and State*, exercised a potent influence upon the intellectual character of his generation. But his chief reputation through life was founded less upon his writings than upon his conversation,\* or rather what may

\* "I shall never forget the effect his first conversation made upon me at the first meeting. It struck me as something not only out of the ordinary course of things, but as an intellectual exhibition altogether matchless. The party was unusually large, but the presence of Coleridge concentrated all attention towards himself. The viands were unusually costly, and the banquet was at once rich and varied; but there seemed to be no dish like Coleridge's conversation to feed upon—and no information so varied as his own. The orator rolled himself upon his chair, and gave the most unrestrained indulgence to his speech—and how fraught with acuteness and originality was that speech, and in what copious and eloquent periods did it flow!..... For nearly two hours he spoke with unhesitating and uninterrupted fluency."—*Thomas Dibdin*.



be called his conversational oratory; for it must have resembled those disquisitions of the Greek philosophers of which the dialogues of Plato give some idea. It is in fragments (published posthumously under the title of *Literary Remains*), in casual remarks scribbled like Sibylline leaves, often on the margin of borrowed books, and in imperfectly-reported conversations, that we must look for proofs of Coleridge's powers. From a careful study of these we shall conceive a high admiration of his genius, and a deep regret at the fragmentary and desultory manifestations of his powers.

Robert Southey (1774-1843) was born at Bristol, where his father carried on the business of a draper (308-311). At the age of fourteen he was sent to the famous Westminster School. After spending four years there, he was expelled for writing an article against flogging in public schools and publishing it in a periodical conducted by the boys. The following year he went to Oxford, and was entered at Balliol College. His friends wished him to take orders in the church, but his religious opinions prevented him. He lingered at Oxford, until Coleridge appeared with his scheme of "Pantisocracy." Quitting Oxford, Southey attempted to raise funds for the enterprise by authorship, and in 1794 published a small volume of poems, which brought neither fame nor profit. His chief reliance, however, was on his epic poem *Joan of Arc*, for which Joseph Cottle, the patron of Coleridge, offered him fifty guineas. In 1795, Southey accompanied his uncle to Lisbon, having been secretly married on the morning of his departure. He returned six months afterwards, and at once began a life of patient literary toil. He had from the outset an allowance of one hundred and sixty pounds a year, yet he was constantly on the verge of poverty, and not even his philosophy and hopefulness were always proof against the difficulties of his position. In 1804 he took up his residence in Cumberland, where he continued to reside for the remainder of his life. Coleridge and Wordsworth were already there. From being a sceptic and a republican, Southey became a firm believer in Christianity, and a stanch supporter of the English Church and Constitution. In 1813 he was appointed poet-laureate;\* and in 1835 received a pension of three

\* The honor was offered to Walter Scott at this time, and he declined it.

hundred pounds a year from the government. During the last four years of his life he had sunk into a state of hopeless imbecility. He died March 21, 1843.

Southey's industry was prodigious. His life was very quiet, and all his time was given to literary labor. One of his letters to a friend tells how his days were spent:—"Three pages of history after breakfast; then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make any selections and biographies, or what else suits my humor till dinner-time. From dinner-time till tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta. After tea I go to poetry, and correct and re-write and copy till I am tired; and then turn to anything else till supper. And this is my life." The list of his writings amounts to *one hundred and nine* volumes. In addition to these he contributed to the *Annual Review* fifty-two articles, to the *Foreign Quarterly* three, to the *Quarterly* ninety-four. The composition of these works was a small part of the labor they involved: they are all full of research.

Southey's success as a poet fell far short of his ambition. *Joan of Arc*, a juvenile production, was received with favor by most of the critical journals on account of its republican doctrines. *Madoc*, completed in 1799, was not given to the world till 1805. Upon this poem he was contented to rest his fame. It is founded on one of the legends connected with the early history of America. Madoc, a Welsh prince of the twelfth century, is represented as making the discovery of the Western world. His contests with the Mexicans, and the ultimate conversion of that people from their cruel idolatry, form its main action. Though the poem is crowded with scenes of more than possible splendor,—of more than human cruelty, courage, and superstition,—the effect is singularly languid. *Thalaba* was published in 1801, and the *Curse of Kehama* in 1810. The first is a tale of Arabian enchantment, full of magicians, dragons, and monsters; and in the second the poet has selected for his groundwork the still more unmanageable mythology of the Hindoos. The poems are written in irregular and wandering rhythm—the *Thalaba* altogether without rhyme; and the language abounds in an affected simplicity, and in obtrusions of vulgar and puerile phraseology. *Kehama* was followed, at an interval of four years, by *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, a poem in blank verse more modest and credible than its predecessors.

The tone of Southey's poems is too uniformly ecstatic and agonizing. His personages, like his scenes, have something unreal, phantom-like, dreamy about them. His robe of inspiration sits gracefully and majestically upon him, but it is too voluminous in its folds, and too heavy in its texture, for the motion of real existence.

Southey's prose works are very numerous and valuable on account of their learning. The *Life of Nelson* (311), written to furnish young seamen with a simple narrative of the exploits of England's greatest naval hero, has perhaps never been equalled for the perfection of its style. In his principal works—*The Book of the Church*, *The Lives of the British Admirals*, *The Life of Wesley*, a *History of Brazil*, and a *History of the Peninsular War*—we find the same clear, vigorous English; we find also the strong prejudice and violent political and literary partiality, which detract from his many excellent qualities as a writer and as a man.

to come.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE MODERN NOVELISTS.

THE department of English literature which has been cultivated during the latter half of the last and the first half of the present century with the greatest assiduity and success, is prose fiction. To give an idea of the fruitfulness of this branch of our subject, it will be advisable to classify the authors and their productions under the two general divisions of fiction as they were set forth in a preceding chapter, viz.: I. Romances properly so called, *i. e.*, the narration of picturesque and romantic adventures; II. Novels, or pictures of real life and society.

I. ROMANCES.—The impulse to this branch of composition was first given by **Horace Walpole** (1717–1797) (326), the fastidious *dilettante* and brilliant chronicler of the court scandal of his day; a man of singularly acute penetration, of sparkling epigrammatic style, but devoid of enthusiasm and elevation. He retired early from political life, and shut himself up in his little fantastic Gothic castle of Strawberry Hill, to collect armor, medals, manuscripts, and painted glass; and to chronicle with malicious assiduity, in his vast and brilliant correspondence, the absurdities, follies, and weaknesses of his day. *The Castle of Otranto* is a short tale, written with great rapidity and without preparation. It was the first successful attempt to take the Feudal Age as the period, and the passion of mysterious, superstitious terror as the motive to the action of an interesting fiction. The manners are totally absurd and unnatural, the character of the heroine being one of those inconsistent portraits in which the sentimental languor of the eighteenth century is superadded to the gentlewoman of the Middle Ages—in short, one of those contradictions to be found in all the romantic fictions before Scott.

The success of Walpole's original and cleverly-written tale encouraged other and more accomplished artists to follow in the same track. The most popular of this class was **Mrs. Ann Radcliffe** (1764-1823), whose numerous romances appeal with power to the emotion of fear. Her two greatest works are *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The scenery of Italy and the south of France pleases her fancy; the ruined castles of the Pyrenees and Apennines form the theatre, and the dark passions of profligate Italian counts are the moving power, of her wonderful fictions. Mystery is the whole spell; the personages have no more individuality than the pieces of a chess-board; but they are made the exponents of such terrible and intense fear, suffering, and suspense, that we sympathize with their fate as if they were real. At the beginning of the century her romances were held in the highest esteem by all readers. Men of letters—Talfourd, Byron, Scott—applauded her: but her fame is declining, and she is now known only by the students of literature. The effect of this kind of writing was so powerful that it was attempted by a crowd of authors. Most of them are forgotten; but there are two other names worthy of special mention.

**Matthew Gregory Lewis** (1775-1818), a good-natured, effeminate man of fashion, the friend of Byron, and one of the early literary advisers of Scott, was the first to introduce into England a taste for the infant German literature of that day, with its spectral ballads and enchantments. He was a man of lively and childish imagination; and besides his metrical translations of the ballads of Bürger, he published in his twentieth year a prose romance called *The Monk*, one of the boldest of hobgoblin stories. **Mrs. Shelley** (1798-1851), the wife of the poet, and the daughter of William Godwin, wrote the powerful tale of (*Frankenstein*.) Its hero, a young student of physiology, succeeds in constructing, out of the horrid remnants of the churchyard and dissecting-room, a monster, to which he afterwards gives a spectral and convulsive life. Some of the chief appearances of the monster, particularly the moment when he begins to move for the first time, and towards the end of the book, among the eternal snows of the arctic circle, are managed with a striking and breathless effect, that makes us for a moment forget the extravagance of the tale.

II. Our second subdivision—the *novels of real life and society*—is so extensive that we can give but a rapid glance at its principal productions. To do this consistently with clearness, we must begin rather far back, with the novels of Miss Burney. **Frances Burney** (1752–1840) was the daughter of Dr. Burney, author of the *History of Music*. While yet residing at her father's house, she, in moments of leisure, composed the novel of *Evelina*, published in 1778. It is said that she did not even communicate to her father the secret of her having written it, until the astonishing success of the fiction rendered her avowal triumphant and almost necessary. *Evelina* was followed in 1782 by *Cecilia*, a novel of the same character. In 1786 Miss Burney received an appointment in the household of Queen Charlotte, where she remained till her marriage with Count d'Arblay, a French refugee officer. She published after her marriage a novel entitled *Camilla*, and two years after her death her *Diary and Letters* appeared.

An eminent place in this class of writers belongs to **William Godwin** (1756–1836), a man of truly powerful and original genius, who devoted his whole life to the propagation of social and political theories—visionary, indeed, and totally impracticable, but marked with the impress of benevolence and philanthropy. His long life was incessantly occupied with literary activity: he produced an immense number of works, some immortal for the genius and originality they display, and all for an intensity and gravity of thought, for reading and erudition. The first work which brought him into notice was the *Inquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793), a Utopian theory by which virtue and benevolence were to be the *primum mobile* of all human actions, and a philosophical republic was to take the place of all our imperfect forms of government. The first and finest of his fictions is *Caleb Williams* (1794). Its chief didactic aim is to show the misery and injustice arising from the present imperfect constitution of society, and the oppression of defective laws, not merely those of the statute-book, but also those of social feeling and public opinion. Caleb Williams is an intelligent peasant-lad, taken into the service of Falkland. Falkland, the true hero, is an incarnation of honor, intellect, benevolence, and passionate love of fame, who, in a moment of ungovernable passion, has committed a murder, for which he allows an innocent man to be executed. This circumstance, partly by acci-

dent, partly by his master's voluntary confession, Williams learns, and is in consequence pursued through the greater part of the tale by the unrelenting persecution of Falkland, who is now led, by his frantic and unnatural devotion to fame, to annihilate, in Williams, the evidence of his guilt. The adventures of the unfortunate fugitive, his dreadful vicissitudes of poverty and distress, the steady pursuit, the escapes and disguises of the victim, like the agonized turnings and doublings of the hunted hare—all this is so depicted that the reader follows the story with breathless interest. At last Caleb is accused by Falkland of robbery, and naturally discloses before the tribunal the dreadful secret which has caused his long persecution, and Falkland dies of shame and a broken heart. The interest of this wonderful tale is indescribable; the various scenes are set before us with something of the minute reality, the dry, grave simplicity of Defoe. "There is no work of fiction which more rivets the attention—no tragedy which exhibits a struggle more sublime, or suffering more intense, than this; yet to produce the effect, no complicated machinery is employed, but the springs of action are few and simple."\*

At the head of the very large class of women who, as novelists, have adorned the more recent literature of England, we must place **Maria Edgeworth** (1767–1849). Nearly all of her long and useful life was passed in Ireland. Many of her earlier works were produced in partnership with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, a man of eccentric character, and of great intellectual activity. The most valuable series of Miss Edgeworth's educational stories were the charming tales entitled *Frank, Harry and Lucy*, *Rosamond*, and others, combined under the general heading of *Early Lessons*. These are written in the simplest style, and are intelligible and intensely interesting even to very young readers; while the knowledge of character they display, the naturalness of their incidents, and the practical principles they inculcate, make them delightful even to the adult reader. The first, the most original, and the best of her stories is *Castle Rackrent*. Abounding in humor and pathos, it sets forth with dramatic effect the follies and vices of the Irish landlords, who have caused so much of the misery of the Irish people. In the novels of *Patronage*, and *The Absentee*, other social errors, either peculiar to that country or common

\* T. N. Talfourd.

to many countries, are powerfully delineated. Miss Edgeworth has done for her countrymen what Scott did with such loving genius for the Scottish people. The services rendered by her to the cause of common sense are incalculable. Walter Scott says that "Some one has described the novels of Miss Edgeworth as a sort of essence of common sense, and the definition is not inappropriate." The singular absence of enthusiasm in her writings, whether religious, political, or social, only makes us wonder at the force, vivacity, and consistency with which she has drawn a large and varied gallery of characters.

Whoever desires to know the life of the rural gentry of England—a class existing in no other country—must read **Jane Austen's** (1775–1817) novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*. In these works the reader will find very little variety and no picturesqueness of persons, little to inspire strong emotion, nothing to excite wonder or laughter; but he will find admirable good sense, exquisite discrimination, and an unrivalled power of easy and natural dialogue. Of this lady, too, Scott held a high opinion; for he says: "That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements, feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I have ever met with."

**Charlotte Bronte** (1816–1855) was the eldest of three remarkable sisters, daughters of a clergyman of Haworth in Yorkshire. Her first story, *The Professor*, was not accepted by the publishers to whom she offered it; but her next work met with a very different fortune. In 1847 (*Jane Eyre*) was published, and established the reputation of the author, who wrote under the name of Currer Bell. *Shirley* followed in the same style in 1849, and *Villette* in 1853. The last was the greatest of her works. In 1854 she married her father's curate, Mr. Nicholls; but after a few months of happiness she died. Her life has been written by **Mrs. Gaskell**, herself a novelist of great merit, and is one of the saddest and most touching of narratives.

The charming sketches of **Mary Russell Mitford** (1789–1855), a lady who has described the village life and scenery of England with the grace and delicacy of Goldsmith himself, seem destined to hold a place in our literature long after the once popular novels of her famous contemporaries shall have been forgotten. *Our Vil-*



*lage* is one of the most delightful books in the language. Miss Mitford describes with the truth and fidelity of Crabbe and Cowper, but without the moral gloom of the one, or the morbid sadness of the other.

The immense colonial possessions of Great Britain, and the Englishman's passion for knowing about foreign nations, have turned the attention of English novelists to the delineation of the manners and scenery of ancient and distant countries. They have also found ready applause for stories of sea-life. England's cherished pride over her long supremacy on the sea has given the masses of her readers admiration for the sailor, and sympathy with the hardships of his life. Captain Marryat (1792-1848), one of the most easy, lively, and truly humorous story-tellers, stands at the head of the marine novelists. High, effervescent, irrepressible animal spirits characterize everything he has written. He seems half-tipsy with the gayety of his heart, and never scruples to introduce the most grotesque extravagances of character, language, and event, provided they are likely to excite a laugh. Nothing can surpass the liveliness and drollery of his *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful*, or *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. Marryat's narratives are often grossly improbable; but we read on with delight, never thinking of the story, solicitous only to follow the droll adventures and laugh at the still droller characters. In many passages he has shown a mastery over the pathetic emotions. Though superficial in his view of character, he is generally faithful to reality, and shows an extensive if not very deep knowledge of what his old waterman calls "human natur." There are few authors more amusing than Marryat.

Among modern novelists William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was one of the greatest. He was born in Calcutta, the son of an English official. In his very early years he was sent away from his eastern home to receive his education in England. After a careful training he was admitted to the University of Cambridge. He did not remain there long; for the death of his father had left him wealth, and freedom to direct his own course of study. His desire was to become an artist. He left the University without his degree, and spent four or five years in France, Italy, and Germany. His study of the masterpieces of the great painters made him distrust his own abilities. But his life abroad gave him stores

of knowledge valuable for his later literary work. On returning to London he continued his art studies; but the loss of his fortune compelled him to throw himself with all his powers into the field of literature. He was first known by his articles in *Fraser's Magazine*, contributed under the names of Michael Angelo Titmarsh and George Fitzboodle, Esq. Tales, criticism, and poetry appeared in great profusion; and were illustrated by the author's own pencil. The chief of his contributions to the magazine was the tale of *Barry Lyndon, The Adventures of an Irish Fortune-hunter*. This was full of humor and incident, but the reading public was not yet expecting a great future for this unknown writer. In 1841 *Punch* was commenced, to which Thackeray contributed the *Snob Papers*, *Jeames's Diary*, and many other papers in prose and verse. In 1846 and the two following years *Vanity Fair* appeared, by many supposed to be the best of his works—certainly the most original.

The novel was not complete before its author took his place 1846] among the great writers of English fiction. The author of satirical sketches and mirthful poems had shown himself to be a consummate satirist, and a great novelist.

*Vanity Fair*, the first of Thackeray's famous works, is called a "Novel without a Hero." It has, however, two heroines—Rebecca Sharp, the impersonation of intellect without heart, and Amelia Sedley, who has heart without intellect; the former is without doubt the ablest creation of modern fiction. As a whole the book is full of quiet sarcasm and rebuke; but a careful reading will perceive the kindly heart that is beating under the bitterest sentence and the most caustic irony.

*Pendennis*, published in 1849 and 1850, was the immediate successor of *Vanity Fair*. Literary life presents scope for description, and is well used in the history of Pen, a hero of no very great worth. As *Vanity Fair* gives us Thackeray's knowledge of life in the present day, so *Esmond* exhibits his intimate acquaintance with the society of the reigns of the later Stuarts and earlier Georges. Like *Vanity Fair*, it is without plot, and gives in an autobiographical form the history of Colonel Henry Esmond. The style of a century and a half ago is reproduced with marvellous fidelity. The story of *Esmond* is probably the best of Thackeray's writings.

*The Virginians* is the history of the grandsons of Esmond. It

consists of a series of well-described scenes and incidents in the reign of George II. The most popular of Thackeray's novels is *The Newcomes*. "The leading theme or moral of the story is the misery occasioned by forced or ill-assorted marriages." The noble courtesy, the Christian gentlemanliness of *Colonel Newcome* is perhaps a reflection of the author himself. *Ethel Newcome* is Thackeray's favorite womanly character. The minor personages are most life-like, while over the whole there is a clear exhibition of the real kindness of Thackeray's heart.

His two courses of lectures *On the English Humorists* and *The Four Georges*, are models of style and criticism.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the most popular novelist of his day. The two men, Dickens and Thackeray, stood side by side, each industrious, each effective in his work, each appreciating and applauding the other. Dickens's father intended that he should follow the profession of the law; but it was distasteful to him, and he abandoned it for the busy life of a reporter to one of the London newspapers. This work gave him opportunities for observing the characters and habits of the poorer classes. His mind was quick to notice eccentricities of human nature. He could not refrain from the delineation of what he saw in men and women, and so he was soon furnishing "Sketches of Life and Character" to the columns of his journal. These papers were afterwards published as *Sketches by Boz*. The volume had a ready sale. Its author was called upon to write a book representing the adventures of a company of Cockney sportsmen, and Mr. Seymour, a comic artist of the day, was to furnish it with illustrations. The volume was published in monthly parts; and the first number appeared in 1836, bearing the title of *The Posthumous Papers*

1836] *of the Pickwick Club*. It was hailed with delight. The author's fame began, and he was regarded by all classes of readers as a writer of the most radiant humor. Everybody was merry over Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, and everybody was eager to read this entertaining author. Volume after volume came from his pen. There seemed to be no limit to his power of caricature, no weariness to him in observing the drolleries of life, no blunting to his sense of fun. After writing *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge*, he made his first visit to America. His fame here was as great as in Eng

land, and he was received with hearty welcome. The visit furnished him with material for two new works, *American Notes for General Circulation*, and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The keen satirist had witnessed some of our national follies, and he was most severe in his exposure of them. Americans then thought, and still think, that he exaggerated our faults. It was natural for him to do that. All of his creations are exaggerations. The dominant faculty of his mind is his observation of peculiarities, and in painting them he distorts and misrepresents the unpeculiar qualities of a character. After his visit to America he spent a year in Italy, and then returning to London, he entered upon the busiest years of his active life. He established and edited *The Daily News*; but finding the work ungenial, he began again the writing of fiction. *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, and *Bleak House*, appeared, to delight his rapturous readers. In 1850 Dickens took charge of a weekly paper, called *Household Words*, and gained for it a large circulation. Afterwards he started his own *All the Year Round*, and contributed to it, in instalments, his later novels. Among the most charming of Dickens's works are his *Christmas Stories*. One came from his pen each year after 1843. The children and the old folk will probably read *A Christmas Carol*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and *The Chimes* long after his more elaborate stories have been forgotten. Dickens's vigorous constitution broke down from desperate overwork, and he died suddenly in 1870.

"No one thinks first of Mr. Dickens as a writer. He is at once, through his books, a friend. He belongs among the intimates of every pleasant-tempered and large-hearted person. He is not so much the guest as the inmate of our homes. He keeps holidays with us, he helps us to celebrate Christmas with heartier cheer, he shares at every New Year in our good wishes; for, indeed, it is not in his purely literary character that he has done most for us, it is as a man of the largest humanity, who has simply used literature as the means by which to bring himself into relation with his fellow-men, and to inspire them with something of his own sweetness, kindness, charity, and good-will."\*

Sir Edward George Bulwer-Lytton (1805-1873) is named with Thackeray and Dickens as the third great writer of the modern novel. He was the son of General Bulwer. In 1844, upon

\* *North American Review*, April, 1863.

inheriting his mother's estates he was granted the privilege of adding her family name, Lytton, to his surname. In boyhood he made his first contribution to the shelves of the English libraries, and throughout his youth and manhood he was an unceasing writer. A few poems, a few dramas, occasional political papers, and a multitude of novels have come from his pen. His principal novels are *Pelham*, *Eugene Aram*, (*The Last Days of Pompeii*) *Rienzi*, and *The Cartons*. "The special ability of Bulwer appears to lie in the delineation of that passion with which the novel is so deeply concerned, the passion of love. All true and manly passions, let it be said, are honored and illustrated in his pages. But he stands alone among novelists of his sex in the portraiture of love. The heroism, the perfect trust, the strength in death, are painted by him with a sympathetic truth for which we know not where to seek a parallel." \*

\* Bayne.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

THE early years of the present century were years of conflict and excitement. The mind was wrought to the highest pitch, now of fear, and now of triumph. England fought for the liberties of Europe; at times the struggle seemed to be for her own existence. The literature of a people always reflects something of the prevalent tone of its age, and we may therefore expect to find the chief compositions of the first thirty years of this century marked by intense feeling, passion, and emotion. There is no other age in English history which exhibits such an array of masters of song. At the close of the reign of George III., in 1820, there were living in England ten poets whose writings commanded the attention of all English readers. Then Crabbe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, and Keats were stars in the literary firmament. They had been impelled to shine forth the passion of their generation. The passionate states of the mind of society demand expression in song. "The victorian age" following this group of poets is distinguished by an unusual number of dignified writers of prose. The calmer inquiries into politics, philosophy, art, and physical science, have been prosecuted in the more tranquil period.

Poetry is the earlier expression of every literature. The first writers whose works are preserved are the writers of verse. The rhythm of their song, the pictures of their excited fancy, the stories they tell, catch and enchain the popular attention. Until our century, the patronage of the English Court, the heartiest sympathies of the English scholar, and the applause of the people have been given to the writer of the song. Prose is now in the ascendant over poetry. An illustration of the fact is at hand. Two elaborate works were recently published in England. Both were written to face the test of scholarly criticism, and to gain the interest of the

common readers. One is in prose; it gives strange opinions on puzzling historical questions, and packs twelve duodecimo volumes. The other has the fascination of rhythmic verse, of scholarship, of mythical story, and has conceded to it a high place among the masterly poems of the century. But Morris's *Earthly Paradise* has a limited sale, and has comparatively few readers; while every public library, and thousands of private libraries, have well-thumbed copies of Froude's *History of England*. It is not that the culture of the poet has declined; the tact of the writer of prose and the thoughtfulness of the masses of readers have improved. Spenser, Milton and Byron are not read as they once were. What has brought about the change? There is the same lofty theme, there is the same resounding line, there is the same poetic inspiration. But the taste and thought of the readers have changed. They are in sympathy with what is called the practical spirit of the age. They lead to the instructive novel, to books of travel, to biography, to history. They compel readers to seek for information, as well as for entertainment and elegant culture in literature.

The writers of this century, then, are supplying what is demanded by an increasing number of thoughtful readers, and in so doing, are marking out what seems to be a peculiar era. The chief external influence has come from Germany. Coleridge introduced it largely, and he has been followed in the work by Thomas Carlyle. In former pages we have spoken of the Elizabethan age as under Italian influence, of the Augustan age as under French influence, and our age, doubtless, will be regarded by the future historian as the age of German influence.

During this century greater progress has been made in History than in any other department of letters. A new impulse was given to the study by the publication of the first volume of Niebuhr's *Roman History*, in Germany, in 1811. This remarkable work taught scholars not only to estimate more accurately the value of the original authorities, but also to enter more fully into the spirit of antiquity, and to think and feel as the Romans felt and thought. In the treatment of Modern History the advance has been equally striking. An *historical sense* has grown up. A writer on any period of modern history is now expected to produce in support of his facts the testimony of credible contemporary witnesses; while the public records of most of the great European nations, now rendered

accessible to students, have imposed upon historians a labor, and opened sources of information, quite unknown to the historical writers of the preceding century.

**Dr. Thomas Arnold** (1795-1842), Head-Master of Rugby School, wrote a *History of Rome* in three volumes, which was 1842] broken off, by his death, at the end of the Second Punic War. This work is a popular exhibition of Niebuhr's views, and is written in clear and masculine English. Dr. Arnold also published *Introductory Lectures on Modern History*. He was the author of several theological works. But his fame is that of a great teacher, rather than of a successful author.

The most eminent English writers upon Ancient History are **Bishop Connop Thirlwall** and **George Grote**, both of whom have produced *Histories of Greece* far superior to any existing in other European languages. Thirlwall's work is dry and unattractive to the general reader; but it is scientific, thorough, and liberal in its spirit. Grote's history was written under peculiar circumstances. The author was a busy banker, and during part of his career he was an active radical politician. His sentiments were democratic, and his sympathies, throughout his work, are heartily enlisted on the side of the Athenian democracy. He had not received a university education. While a clerk in a banking-house, he set himself at work to master the Greek language and literature, to make himself a scholar in Greek Geography, Antiquities, and History. His toilsome work was so well done that all readers came to look upon him as the most competent of Englishmen to deal with Grecian history and letters.

The most versatile writer of the century is **Thomas Babington Macaulay** (1800-1859). In descriptive poetry (325), in criticism, in essay-writing, in political papers, in oratory, and especially in historical narration, he has shown himself to be a master. He was born in England, but his lineage was Scotch. His father, Zachary Macaulay, a merchant, was an ardent philanthropist and one of the earliest opponents of the slave trade. At Cambridge, Macaulay won high honors. Leaving the university he began the study of the law, but, while at his books, he suddenly achieved a literary reputation by an article on Milton (341) in the *Edinburgh Review*. 1825] This was the first of a long series of brilliant literary and historical essays contributed to the same periodical. His



career as a statesman was brilliant, but it is as a man of letters that his name will be longest remembered.

His *Lays of Ancient Rome* are the best known of his poems; but the lines written upon his defeat at Edinburgh in 1847 are the finest. His Essays and his History will always give him a high place among English classics. His style has been well described by Dean Milman. "Its characteristics were vigor and animation, copiousness, clearness; above all, sound English, now a rare excellence. The vigor and life were unabating; perhaps in that conscious strength which cost no exertion, he did not always gauge and measure the force of his own words. . . . His copiousness had nothing tumid, diffuse, Asiatic; no ornament for the sake of ornament. As to its clearness, one may read a sentence of Macaulay twice to judge of its full force, never to comprehend its meaning. His English was pure, both in idiom and in words, pure to fastidiousness; . . . every word must be genuine English, nothing that approached real vulgarity, nothing that had not the stamp of popular use, or the authority of sound English writers, nothing unfamiliar to the common ear."

Macaulay's Essays (341, 342) are philosophical and historical disquisitions, embracing a vast range of subjects; but the larger number, and the most important, relate to English History. These Essays, however, were only preparatory to his *History of England*. In the opening chapter of that grand work, he says: "I purpose to write the *History of England* from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is in the memory of men still living." His purpose was not carried out, for the narrative is brought down only to the death of William the Third, and the latter portion of what is written is fragmentary. In a review of Sir James Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution*, Macaulay observed that "a *History of England*, written throughout in this manner, would be the most fascinating book in the language. It would be more in request at the circulating libraries than the last novel." The unexampled popularity of his own History verified the prediction.

Another great English writer on modern history in the present century, superior in judgment to Macaulay, though inferior in graces of style, is Henry Hallam (1778-1859) (337). He was one of the early contributors to the *Edinburgh Review*. His criticism in that Journal, in 1808, of Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden's

works was marked by that power of discrimination and impartial judgment which characterized all his subsequent writings.

The result of his long-continued studies first appeared in his *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, published in 1818, exhibiting, in a series of historical dissertations, a comprehensive survey of the chief circumstances that can interest a philosophical inquirer during the period usually denominated the Middle Ages. Mr. Hallam's next work was *The Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII. to the Death of George II.*, published in 1827; and his third great production was *An Introduction to the Literature of Europe, in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, which appeared in 1837-39. His latter years were saddened by the loss of his two sons, the eldest of whom was the subject of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

An estimate of Hallam's literary merits has been given by Macaulay, his illustrious contemporary, in a review of the *Constitutional History*:—"Mr. Hallam is, on the whole, far better qualified than any other writer of our time for the office which he has undertaken. He has great industry and great acuteness. His knowledge is extensive, varied, and profound. His mind is equally distinguished by the amplitude of its grasp, and by the delicacy of its tact. . . . His work is eminently judicial. The whole spirit is that of the bench, not that of the bar. He sums up with a calm, steady impartiality, turning neither to the right nor to the left, glossing over nothing, exaggerating nothing, while the advocates on both sides are alternately biting their lips to hear their conflicting misstatements and sophisms exposed. On a general survey, we do not scruple to pronounce the *Constitutional History* the most impartial book that we have ever read."

The oft-repeated reproach once directed against the English people, that Gibbon was their only ecclesiastical historian, has been removed by **Henry Hart Milman** (1791-1868), Dean of St. Paul's, one of the best-balanced and most highly-cultivated intellects that England has produced. For many years he held the professorship of Poetry at Oxford, and at different times he published *The Martyr of Antioch*, the *Fall of Jerusalem*, and other poems. *Fazio*, and the *Fall of Jerusalem*, both dramas, are perhaps the most meritorious. But it is upon his historical productions that his fame rests. These have already taken their place among the Eng-

lish classics. They consist of three great works, the *History of the Jews*, the *History of Christianity*, and the *History of Latin Christianity*. Certain indispensable qualities of the true historian Millman possessed in fuller perfection than any English writer that ever lived,—the keenest critical sagacity, a rare faculty of sifting and determining the exact value of evidence, a mind singularly free from prejudice, and almost unerring in its power of penetrating to the truth. He moves with the most perfect ease beneath the immense weight of his acquisitions, never allowing them to interfere with his independence of thought. He grappled with a subject extending over a vast period of time, embracing the widest area of human activity, and dealing with the subtlest and most intricate of phenomena. It presents difficulties from which any but the boldest would shrink.

The theological and religious literature of this age is marked by a less metaphysical character than that of former times. Works of a controversial kind have been fewer, while greater attention has been paid to exegetical studies. Many of the best-known religious writers have won their chief literary honors in the other fields of criticism, history, or philosophy, and receive notice there. The three most distinguished theological writers are perhaps Hall, Foster, and Chalmers.

In Philosophy many contributions have been made to our literature during the period under consideration. Names of men appear whose analyses and investigations, especially in the inductive sciences, have had nothing to compare with them since the time of Bacon. The influence of Germany has been felt in this department. The study of Logic in England has been revived, and is now freed from the contempt in which it was long held. **Sir William Hamilton (339)** (1788–1856) and **John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)** are most eminent among the philosophers. Hamilton was educated at Oxford, and was called to the bar in 1813. In 1821 he became Professor of Universal History at Edinburgh, and in 1836 he obtained the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics. His *Essays from the Edinburgh Review* and his *Edition of Dr. Reid's Works* were published during his lifetime. His *Lectures* were published after his death. He was the greatest philosopher of his age. His style is a model of philosophical writing.

Mr. Mill has been a prolific writer upon questions of criticism, philosophy, and political economy. He has also been interested in politics, and has ranked with the radical party in England. His chief works are *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*; *Principles of Political Economy*; *An Essay on Liberty*; and *An Essay on the Subjection of Women*.

**Richard Whately** (1787-1863) was educated at Oxford, and having entered the service of the English Church he received several responsible positions, the highest being the Archbishopric of Dublin. His first work, published anonymously, was the once famous argument entitled *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*. It was an illustration of the fact that the principles of reasoning used by infidels against the teachings of the New Testament are just as effective in seeming to disprove the best authenticated facts of history. While Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, he published his well-known works on *Logic* and *Rhetoric*. To enumerate all the publications of this diligent man would not be possible in this sketch. "He was always either writing himself, or helping some one else to write." His best essays are *New Testament Difficulties*, *The Sabbath*, and *Romanism*. His lectures on *Political Economy* (346) appeared in 1831; and later, he published other works on social and economical questions. His work in annotating an edition of Bacon's essays has received much deserved praise. Whately had a mind of great logical power, with little imagination and fancy. His views of questions are often shallow, but always practical. His style is luminous, easy, and well adorned with every-day illustrations.

The inductive method of Bacon has never been so carefully applied and diligently followed as in the scientific researches of the nineteenth century; and the advance of physical science has therefore been more rapid than that of any other branch of human knowledge. The greatest writers on physical science are still alive, and are therefore unmentioned in this volume. Many of them will find prominent places in English literature on account of the style of their writings.

The increased facilities of printing and a larger class of readers have combined to render the "periodicals" the great feature of the

age. These range from the valuable quarterlies, through the various forms of magazine and review, down to the daily paper, the peculiar feature of the literature of the times. Some of the most valuable essays have been contributed to these magazines. Every shade of politics, every school of philosophy, every sect of religion, has its paper or its magazine. To give a sketch of these periodicals is of course impossible, but the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* imparted such an impulse to literature as to demand a few words.

The *Edinburgh Review* was established in 1802 by a small party of young men,—Brougham, Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Horner,—obscure at that time, but ambitious and enterprising, who [1802] were all destined to attain distinction. It founded its claim to success upon the boldness and vivacity of its tone, its total rejection of all precedent and authority, and the audacity of its discussions. It was conducted from 1803 to 1829 by **Francis Jeffrey** (333) (1773–1850), a Scotch advocate, who was subsequently raised to the bench. He wrote a large number of critical articles, marked by vigor and elegance of style, and usually by keen discrimination. Another of the most important of the early contributors to the *Review*, who indeed edited the first number, was **Sydney Smith** (331, 332) (1771–1845), an English clergyman, and in the later period of his life Canon of St. Paul's. He wrote chiefly upon political and practical questions with a richness of comic humor and dry sarcasm, which is not only exquisitely amusing, but is full of truth as well as pleasantry.

The *Edinburgh* was reckless of fear or favor, and with a dashing and attractive style it fiercely advocated liberal opinions. To counteract its influence a new periodical, called *The Quarterly Review*, was started in 1809. It was warmly welcomed by the friends of the government, and immediately obtained a literary reputation at least equal to its rival. The editorship was intrusted to **William Gifford** (1757–1826), the translator of Juvenal, and the author of *Baviad* and *Mœviad*, two of the most bitter, powerful, and resistless of modern literary satires. Gifford was a self-taught man, who had raised himself, by dint of almost superhuman exertions and admirable integrity, to a high place among the literary men of his age.

He was succeeded in the editorship of the *Quarterly*, after a short interregnum, by **John Gibson Lockhart** (319) (1794–1854), a

man of talent, the author of several novels, and one of the earliest and ablest contributors to *Blackwood's Magazine*. Many of the best articles in the *Quarterly* were written by himself. In 1820 he married the eldest daughter of Sir Walter Scott, and in 1837-39 he published the charming *Life of his father-in-law*. In biography he was unrivalled. His *Life of Napoleon*, which appeared without the author's name, is far superior to many more ambitious performances.

*Blackwood's Magazine* first appeared in 1817, and was distinguished by the ability of its purely literary articles, as well as by the violence of its political sentiments. Among the many able men who wrote for it, one of the most eminent was **John Wilson (318)** (1785-1854), the son of a wealthy merchant. After studying at Oxford, he took up his abode on the banks of the Windermere, attracted thither by the society of Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. Wilson was an ardent admirer of Wordsworth, whose style he adopted, to some extent, in his own poems, the *Isle of Palms* and *The City after the Plague*. The year before the publication of the latter poem, Wilson had been compelled, by the loss of his fortune, to remove to Edinburgh, and to adopt literature as a profession. Though Mr. Blackwood was the editor of his own magazine, Wilson was the presiding spirit, and under the name of Christopher North and other pseudonyms he poured forth article after article with exuberant fertility. His *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, in which politics, literary criticism, and fun were intermingled, gained great popularity. His pathetic tales, the *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*, and a novel *The Trials of Margaret Lindsay*, show the gentle, genial spirit of this most eloquent author. In 1820, as a competitor of Sir William Hamilton, he was elected professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh.

**William Hazlitt (338)** (1778-1830), son of a Unitarian minister, was educated as an artist, but lived by literature. He was one of the best critics in the earlier part of this century. His paradoxes are a little startling, and sometimes lead him astray; but there is a delicacy of taste, a richness of imagination, and a perceptive power, that make him a worthy second to De Quincey. His style is vivid and picturesque, and his evolutions of character are clear. His chief works are *Principles of Human Action*, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *Table Talk*, *Lectures on various authors*, *Essays*

on English Novelists in the *Edinburgh*, and a *Life of Napoleon* in four volumes.

It would be impossible in our limits to give an account of the many other writers who distinguished themselves by their contributions to the Reviews and Magazines; but in addition to those already mentioned two essayists stand forth pre-eminent—Charles Lamb and Thomas De Quincey.

Charles Lamb (334, 335) (1775–1834), a poor man's son, was educated at Christ's Hospital. He was a *Londoner*: London life supplied him with his richest materials, and his mind was imbued with the older writers. He was an old writer, who lived a century or two after his real time. During the early and greater part of his life, Lamb, poor and unfriended, was drudging as a clerk in the India House; and it was not until late in life that he was unchained from the desk. There was a dark shadow along his path, for his beloved sister Mary was subject to fits of insanity. In one of these fits she had killed her mother. That sad event, and the sad care which Lamb gave to his sister, imparted a tender melancholy to his writings, even where they seem to abound in good humor. In his earliest compositions, such as the drama of *John Woodvil*, and subsequently in the *Essays of Elia*, although the world at first perceived a mere imitation of the quaintness of expression of the old writers, there was in reality a revival of their very spirit. The *Essays of Elia*, contributed by him at different times to *The London Magazine*, are surpassingly fine for humor, taste, penetration, and vivacity. Where shall we find such intense delicacy of feeling, such unimaginable happiness of expression, such a searching into the very body of truth, as in these unpretending compositions? The style has a peculiar and most subtle charm; not the result of labor, for it is found in as great perfection in his familiar letters—a certain quaintness and antiquity, not affected in Lamb, but the natural garb of his thoughts. As in all the true humorists, his pleasantry was inseparably allied with the finest pathos; the merry quip on the tongue was but the commentary on the tear which trembled in the eye. The inspiration that other poets find in the mountains, in the forest, in the sea, Lamb could draw from the crowd of Fleet-street, from the remembrances of an old actor, from the benchers of the Temple.

Lamb was the schoolfellow, the devoted admirer and friend of

Coleridge. Coleridge says of him: "Believe me, no one is competent to judge of poor dear Charles who has not known him long and well, as I have done. His heart is as whole as his head. The wild words which sometimes come from him on religious subjects might startle you from the mouth of any other man; but in him they are mere flashes of firework. . . . Catch him when alone, and the great odds are you will find him with the Bible or an old divine before him, or may be, and that is the next door in excellence, an old English poet; in such is his pleasure."

There never was a man more beloved by all his contemporaries, by men of every opinion, of every shade of literary, political and religious sentiment. His *Specimens of the Old English Dramatists* first showed to modern readers what treasures of the richest poetry lay concealed in the unpublished and unknown writers of the Elizabethan age. Indeed, Lamb's mind, in its sensitiveness, in its mixture of wit and pathos, was eminently Shakespearean; and his intense and reverent study of the works of Shakespeare doubtless gave this tendency. In his poems, as, for instance, the *Farewell to Tobacco*, the *Old Familiar Faces*, and his few but beautiful sonnets, we find the very essence and spirit of this quaint tenderness of fancy, the simplicity of the child mingled with the learning of the scholar.

Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) was one of the greatest masters of English prose. He was the son of a wealthy Manchester merchant. After leaving Oxford he settled at Grasmere, and became intimate with Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. There he became a slave to the habit of opium-eating. After many years of indulgence, and by a most desperate struggle, he broke the chain that had bound him. The last thirty-eight years of his life he was a resident of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The best known of his writings, the *Confessions of an Opium-eater* (329, 330), made a great sensation upon its publication in 1821. The sketches of his experience with the drug are fearfully vivid and picturesque, while in places the ridicule of himself is keen and amusing. His language sometimes soars to astonishing heights of eloquence. Some of his essays are almost exclusively humorous, among which *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts* is the best known. An able critic, in the *London Quarterly Review*, No. 219, thus sums up his literary merits:—"A great master of



WALTER SCOTT.

BYRON, MOORE, SHELLEY, KEATS, CAMPBELL, HUNT, and  
LANDOR; MRS. BROWNING.

"THE LAKE SCHOOL." { William Wordsworth,  
S. T. Coleridge,  
Robert Southey.

THE MODERN NOVELISTS. { Horace Walpole,  
Ann Radcliffe,  
Matthew Gregory Lewis,  
Frances Burney,  
William Godwin,  
Maria Edgeworth,  
Jane Austen,  
Charlotte Brontë,  
Mary Russell Mitford,  
Frederick Marryat,  
William Makepeace Thackeray,  
Charles Dickens,  
Sir Edward George Bulwer Lytton.

THE HISTORIANS. { Thomas Arnold,  
Connop Thirlwall,  
George Grote,  
Thomas B. Macaulay,  
Henry Hallam,  
Henry Hart Milman.

THE PHILOSOPHERS. { William Hamilton,  
John Stuart Mill.

THE ESSAYISTS. { Francis Jeffrey,  
Sydney Smith,  
John Gibson Lockhart,  
John Wilson,  
William Hazlitt,  
Charles Lamb,  
Thomas DeQuincey.



English composition; a critic of uncommon delicacy; an honest and unflinching investigator of received opinions; a philosophic inquirer, second only to his first and sole hero (Coleridge), De Quincey has left no successor to his rank. The exquisite finish of his style, with the scholastic rigor of his logic, form a combination which centuries may never reproduce, but which every generation should study as one of the marvels of English literature."

The boldness and thoughtfulness with which questions of international law, of social science, of political economy are discussed, are proofs of the manliness and breadth of the literary spirit of the age. The profoundest thinkers are interested in these studies; and the writers of the English language are foremost in the discussion. **Jeremy Bentham** (1748-1832), the most important writer upon ethics, jurisprudence, and political economy, was the son of a solicitor in London, was educated at Oxford, and was called to the bar, but did not pursue it as a profession. For half a century Bentham was the centre of an influential circle of philosophical writers, and was the founder of what is called the Utilitarian school. His maxim as a social reformer was "the greatest happiness to the greatest number." In setting forth the way by which such happiness was to be obtained, he held what was considered to be extremely radical ground. It is upon his writings on jurisprudence that his fame chiefly rests; and almost all the improvements in English law that have since been carried into effect may be traced, either directly or indirectly, to his exertions (344, 345).

# THE RULERS OF ENGLAND.

## THE SAXON LINE.

Egbert, (King of the West Saxons, commonly called the first king of England), A. D. 827—836.  
 Ethelwolf, 836—857.  
 Ethelred, 857—871.  
 Alfred the Great, 871—901.  
 Edward, 901—925.  
 Athelstan, 925—941.  
 Edmund, 941—948.  
 Edred, 948—955.  
 Edwy, 955—959.  
 Edgar the Peaceable, 959—975.  
 Edward II., 975—979.  
 Ethelred the Unready, 979—1016.  
 Edmund Ironsides, 1016—1017.

## THE DANISH LINE.

{ Canute the Great, 1017—1035.  
 { Harold, 1035—1039.  
 { Hardicanute, 1039—1041.

## THE SAXON LINE RESTORED.

{ Edward the Confessor, 1041—1066.  
 { Harold, 1066.

## THE NORMAN LINE.

{ William the Conqueror, 1066—1087.  
 { William II. (Rufus), 1087—1100.  
 { Henry I., 1100—1135.  
 { Stephen of Blois, 1135—1154.

## THE PLANTAGENETS.

{ Henry II., 1154—1189.  
 { Richard I., 1189—1199.  
 { John, 1199—1216.  
 { Henry III., 1216—1272.  
 { Edward I., 1272—1307.  
 { Edward II., 1307—1327.  
 { Edward III., 1327—1377.  
 { Richard II., 1377—1399.  
 { Henry IV., 1399—1413.  
 { Henry V., 1413—1422.  
 { Henry VI., 1422—1461.  
 { Edward IV., 1461—1483.  
 { Edward V., 1483.  
 { Richard III., 1483—1485.

## THE TUDORS.

{ Henry VII., 1485—1509.  
 { Henry VIII., 1509—1547.  
 { Edward VI., 1547—1553.  
 { Mary, 1553—1558.  
 { Elizabeth, 1558—1603.

## THE STUARTS.

{ James I., 1603—1625.  
 { Charles I., 1625—1649.

The Commonwealth, 1649—1660.

## THE STUARTS AFTER THE RESTORATION.

{ Charles II., 1660—1685.  
 { James II., 1685—1688.

## THE HOUSE OF NASSAU.

{ William III., 1688—1702.  
 { and Mary, (died 1694).

## THE LAST OF THE STUARTS.

Anne, 1702—1714.

## THE HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK.

{ George I., 1714—1727.  
 { George II., 1727—1760.  
 { George III., 1760—1820.  
 { George IV., 1820—1830.  
 { William IV., 1830—1837.  
 { Victoria, 1837—

## A LIST OF THE POETS LAUREATE.

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Edmund Spenser . . . . .	1591—1599
Samuel Daniel . . . . .	1599—1619
Ben Jonson . . . . .	1619—1637
(Interregnum)	
William Davenant, Knight . . . . .	1660—1668
*John Dryden . . . . .	1670—1689
Thomas Shadwell . . . . .	1689—1692
Nahum Tate . . . . .	1692—1715
Nicholas Rowe . . . . .	1715—1718
†Lawrence Eusden . . . . .	1718—1730
Colley Cibber . . . . .	1730—1757
William Whitehead . . . . .	1757—1785
Thomas Warton . . . . .	1785—1790
†Henry James Pye . . . . .	1790—1813
Robert Southey . . . . .	1813—1843
William Wordsworth . . . . .	1843—1850
Alfred Tennyson . . . . .	1850—

\* Though Dryden did not receive his letters-patent until the year 1670, he nevertheless was paid the salary for the two preceding years.

† For Eusden see 'Dunciad,' Book I., line 63; and for Colley Cibber, see same work *passim*.

‡ "Better to err with Pope than shine with Pye," says Lord Byron, in his 'Hints from Horace.' And again in the 'Vision of Judgment,' the same poet represents the ghost of King George as exclaiming, on hearing Southey's recitation of his 'Vision'—

"What, what!

Pye come again? no more—no more of that!"

It is by these notices alone that poor Pye still hangs on the human memory.

*W*

A

## SKETCH OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

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### CHAPTER I.

LITERATURE is a positive element of civilized life; but in different countries and epochs it exists sometimes as a passive taste or means of culture, and at others as a development of productive tendencies. The first is the usual form in colonial societies, where the habit of looking to the fatherland for intellectual nutriment as well as political authority is the natural result even of patriotic feeling. In academic culture, habitual reading, moral and domestic tastes, and cast of mind, the Americans were identified with the mother country, and, in all essential particulars, would naturally follow the style thus inherent in their natures and confirmed by habit and study. At first, therefore, the literary development of the United States was imitative; but with the progress of the country, and her increased leisure and means of education, the writings of the people became more and more characteristic; theological and political occasions gradually ceased to be the exclusive moulds of thought; and didactic, romantic, and picturesque compositions appeared from time to time. Irving peopled "Sleepy Hollow" with fanciful creations; Bryant described not only with truth and grace, but with devotional sentiment, the characteristic scenes of his native land; Cooper introduced Europeans to the wonders of her forest and sea-coast; Bancroft made her story eloquent; and Webster proved that the race of orators who once roused her children to freedom was not extinct. The names of Edwards and Franklin were echoed abroad; the bonds of mental dependence were gradually loosened; the inherited tastes remained, but they were freshened with a more native zest; and although

Brockden Brown is still compared to Godwin, Irving to Addison, Cooper to Scott, Hoffman to Moore, Emerson to Carlyle, and Holmes to Pope, a characteristic vein, an individuality of thought, and a local significance are now generally recognized in the emanations of the American mind; and the best of them rank favorably and harmoniously with similar exemplars in British literature; while, in a few instances, the nationality is so marked, and so sanctioned by true genius, as to challenge the recognition of all impartial and able critics.

The intellect of the country first developed in a theological form. This was a natural consequence of emigration, induced by difference of religious opinion, the free scope which the new colonies afforded for discussion, and the variety of creeds represented by the different races who thus met on a common soil, including every diversity of sentiment, from Puritanism to Episcopacy, each extreme modified by shades of doctrine and individual speculation. The clergy, also, were the best educated and most influential class: in political and social as well as religious affairs, their voice had a controlling power; and for a considerable period, they alone enjoyed that frequent immunity from physical labor which is requisite to mental productiveness. The colonial era, therefore, boasted only a theological literature, for the most part fugitive and controversial, yet sometimes taking a more permanent shape, as in the Biblical Concordance of Newman, and some of the writings of Roger Williams, Increase and Cotton Mather, Mayhew, Cooper, Stiles, Dwight, Elliot, Johnson, Chauncey, Witherspoon, and Hopkins. There is no want of learning or reasoning power in many of the tracts of those once formidable disputants; and such reading accorded with the stern tastes of our ancestors; but, as a general rule, the specimens which yet remain in print, are now only referred to by the curious student of divinity or the antiquarian. The celebrated *Treatise on the Will*, by Dr. Edwards, an enduring relic of this epoch, survives, and, in its sagacious hardihood of thought, forms a characteristic introduction to the literary history of New England.

✕ **Jonathan Edwards** (Specimens of American Literature 3) was the only son of a Connecticut minister of good acquirements and sincere piety. He was born in 1703, in the town of Windsor; he entered Yale College at the age of thirteen, and at nineteen be-

came a settled preacher in New York. In 1723 he was elected a tutor in the college at New Haven; and after discharging its duties with eminent success for two years, he became the colleague of his grandfather, in the ministry, at the beautiful village of Northampton, in Massachusetts. Relieved from all material cares by the affection of his wife, his time was entirely given to professional occupations and study. An ancient elm is yet designated in the town where he passed so many years, in the crotch of which was his favorite seat, where he was accustomed to read and think for hours together. His sermons began to attract attention, and several were republished in England. As a writer, he first gained celebrity by a treatise on *Original Sin*. He was inaugurated President of Princeton College, N. J., on the 16th of February, 1757; and on the 22d of the ensuing March died of small-pox, which then ravaged the vicinity.

"This remarkable man," says Sir James Mackintosh, "the metaphysician of America, was formed among the Calvinists of New England, when their stern doctrine retained its vigorous authority. His power of subtile argument, perhaps unmatched, certainly unsurpassed among men, was joined, as in some of the ancient mystics, with a character which raised his piety to fervor. He embraced their doctrine, probably without knowing it to be theirs. Had he suffered this noble principle to take the right road to all its fair consequences, he would have entirely concurred with Plato, with Shaftesbury and Malebranche, in devotion to 'the first good, first perfect, and first fair.' But he thought it necessary afterwards to limit his doctrine to his own persuasion, by denying that such moral excellence could be discovered in divine things by those Christians who did not take the same view with him of their religion." \*

Although so meagre a result, as far as regards permanent literature, sprang from the early theological writings in America, they had a certain strength and earnestness which tended to invigorate and exercise the minds of the people; sometimes, indeed, conducive to bigotry, but often inciting reflective habits. The mental life of the colonists seemed, for a long time, identical with religious discussion; and the names of Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams



(1), George Fox, Whitefield, the early field-preacher, and subsequently those of Dr. Hopkins, and Murray, the father of Universalism in America, were rallying words for logical warfare; the struggle between the advocates of Quakerism, baptism by immersion, and others of the minority against those of the old Presbyterian and Church of England doctrine, gave birth to a multitude of tracts, sermons, and oral debates which elicited no little acumen, rhetoric, and learning. The originality and productiveness of the American mind in this department have, indeed, always been characteristic features in its development. Scholars and orators of distinguished ability have never been wanting to the clerical profession among us; and every sect in the land has its illustrious interpreters, who have bequeathed, or still contribute, written memorials of their ability. The diversity of sects is one of the most curious and striking facts in our social history, and is fully illustrated by the literary organs of each denomination, from the spiritual commentaries of Bush to the ardent Catholicism of Brownson ( ). About the commencement of the present century, a memorable conflict took place between the orthodox and liberal party; and among the writings of the latter may be found more finished specimens of composition than had previously appeared on ethics and religion. Independent of their opinions, the high morality and beautiful sentiment, as well as chaste and graceful diction, of the leaders of that school, gave a literary value and interest to pulpit eloquence which soon exercised a marked influence on the literary taste of the community. Religious and moral writings now derived a new interest from style. At the head of this class, who achieved a world-wide reputation for genius in ethical literature, is **William Ellery Channing** (1780-1842) (21).

✕ Seventy-five years ago there might have been seen, threading the streets of Richmond, Va., a diminutive figure, with a pale, attenuated face, eyes of spiritual brightness, an expansive and calm brow, and movements of nervous alacrity. The youth was one of those children of New England, braced by her discipline, and early sent forth to earn a position in the world by force of character and activity of intellect. The teachings of Harvard had yielded him the requisite attainments to discharge the office of private tutor in a wealthy Virginian family. There, far from the companions of his studies and the home of his childhood, through secret conflicts,

devoted application to books and meditation, amid privations, comparative isolation, and premature responsibility, he resolved to consecrate himself to the Christian ministry. Thence he went to Boston, and for more than forty years pursued the consistent tenor of his way as an eloquent divine and powerful writer, achieving a wide renown, bequeathing a venerated memory, and a series of discourses, reviews, and essays, which, with remarkable perspicuity and earnestness, vindicate the cause of freedom, the original endowments and eternal destiny of human nature, the sanctions of religion, and 'the ways of God to man.' He died, one beautiful October evening, at Bennington, Vermont, while on a summer excursion, and was buried at Mount Auburn. A monument commemorates the gratitude of his parishioners and the exalted estimation he had acquired in the world. A biography prepared by his nephew recounts the few incidents of his career, and gracefully unfolds the process of his growth and mental history.

"It is seldom that ethical writings interest the multitude. The abstract nature of the topics they discuss, and the formal style in which they are usually embodied, are equally destitute of that popular charm that wins the common heart. A remarkable exception is presented in the literary remains of Channing. The simple yet comprehensive ideas upon which he dwells, the tranquil gravity of his utterance, and the winning clearness of his style, render many of his productions universally attractive as examples of quiet and persuasive eloquence. And this result is entirely independent of any sympathy with his theological opinions, or experience of his pulpit oratory. Indeed, the genuine interest of Dr. Channing's writings is ethical. As the champion of a sect, his labors have but a temporary value; as the exponent of a doctrinal system, he will not long be remembered with gratitude, because the world is daily better appreciating the religious sentiment as of infinitely more value than any dogma; but as a moral essayist, some of the more finished writings of Channing will have a permanent hold upon reflective and tasteful minds."

Of all the foreign commentators on our political institutions and national character, (De Tocqueville) is the most distinguished for philosophical insight; and although many of his speculations are visionary, not a few are pregnant with reflective wisdom. He says in regard to the literary development of such a republic as our

own, that its early fruits "will bear marks of an untutored and rude vigor of thought, frequently of great variety and singular fecundity." What may be termed the casual writing and speaking of the country, confirms this prophecy. The two most prolific branches of literature in America are journalism and educational works. The aim in both is to supply that immediate demand which, according to the French philosopher, is more imperative and prevailing than in monarchical lands. Newspapers and school-books are, therefore, the characteristic form of literature in the United States. The greatest scholars of the country have not deemed the production of the latter an unworthy labor, nor the most active, enterprising, and ambitious, failed to exercise their best powers in the former sphere. An intelligent foreigner, therefore, who observed the predominance of these two departments, would arrive at the just conclusion, that the great mental distinction of the nation is twofold—the universality of education, and a general, though superficial, intellectual activity in the mass of the people. There is, however, still another phase of our literary condition equally significant; and that is the popularity of what may be termed domestic reading—a species of books intended for the family, and designed to teach science, religion, morality, the love of nature, and other desirable acquisitions. These works range from a juvenile to a mature scope and interest, both in form and spirit, but are equally free of all extravagance,—except it be purely imaginative,—and are unexceptional, often elevated, in moral tone. They constitute the literature of the fireside, and give to the young their primary ideas of the world and of life. Hence their moral importance can scarcely be overrated. Accordingly, children's books have not been thought unworthy the care of the best minds; philosophers like Guizot, poets like Hans Andersen, popular novelists like Scott and Dickens, have not scorned this apparently humble but most influential service. The reform in books for the young was commenced in England by Maria Edgeworth and Mrs. Barbauld, when the *Parents' Assistant* and *Original Poems for Infant Minds* superseded *Mother Goose* and *Jack the Giant-Killer*; and with the instinct of domestic utility so prevalent on this side of the Atlantic, this impulse was caught up and prolonged here, and resulted in a class of books and writers, not marked by high genius or striking originality, yet honorable to the good sense and moral

feeling of the country. These have supplied the countless homes scattered over the western continent with innocent, instructive, and often refined reading, sometimes instinct not only with a domestic but a national spirit; often abounding with the most fresh and true pictures of scenery, customs, and local traits, and usually conceived in a tone of gentleness and purity fitted to chasten and improve the taste. These writers have usually adapted themselves equally to the youngest and to the most advanced of the family circle—extended their labor of love from the child's story-book to the domestic novel. It is creditable to the sex that this sphere has been filled, in our country, chiefly by women, the list of whom includes a long array of endeared and honored names.

Oratory is eminently the literature of republics. Political freedom gives both occasion and impulse to thought on public interests; and its expression is a requisite accomplishment to every intelligent and patriotic citizen. American eloquence, although not unknown in the professional spheres of colonial life, developed with originality and richness at the epoch of the revolution. Indeed, the questions that agitated the country naturally induced popular discussions, and as a sense of wrong and a resolve to maintain the rights of freemen took the place of remonstrance and argument, a race of orators seems to have sprung to life, whose chief traits continue evident in a long and illustrious roll of names, identified with our statesmen, legislators, and divines. From the stripling (Hamilton,) who, in July, 1774, held a vast concourse in breathless excitement, in the fields near New York, while he demonstrated the right and necessity of resistance to British oppression, to the mature (Webster,) who, in December, 1829, defended the union of the states with an argumentative and rhetorical power ever memorable in the annals of legislation, there has been a series of remarkable public speakers who have nobly illustrated this branch of literature in the United States. The fame of American eloquence is in part traditional. Warren, (Adams,) and (Otis) in Boston, and (Patrick Henry) in Virginia, by their spirit-stirring appeals, roused the land to the assertion and defence of its just rights; and Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, Pinckney, Jay, Rutledge, and other firm and gifted men gave wise and effective direction to the power thus evoked, by their logical and earnest appeals.

Foremost among these remarkable men was **Alexander Hamil-**

ton (1757–1804) (66), by birth a West Indian, by descent uniting the Scotch vigor and sagacity of character with the accomplishment of the French. While a collegian in New York, his talents, at once versatile and brilliant, were apparent in the insight and poetry of his debates, the solemn beauty of his devotion, the serious argument of his ambitious labors, and the readiness of his humorous sallies; with genuine religious sentiment, born perhaps of his Huguenot blood, he united a zest for pleasure, a mercurial temperament, and grave aspirations. In his first youth the gentleman, the pietist, the hero, and the statesman, alternately exhibited, sometimes dazzled, at others impressed, and always won the hearts of his comrades. His first public demonstration was as an orator, when but seventeen; and notwithstanding his slender figure and extreme youth, he took captive both the reason and feeling of a popular assembly. Shortly after he became involved in the controversy then raging between Whigs and Tories; and his pamphlets and newspaper essays were read with mingled admiration and incredulity at the rare powers of expression and mature judgment thus displayed by the juvenile antagonist of bishops and statesmen.

The idol of the Federal party, and a candidate for the chief magistracy, he became entangled in a duel planned by political animosity, and fell at Weehawken, opposite the city of New York, by the hand of Aaron Burr, on the 11th of July, 1804. The impression caused by his untimely death was unprecedented in this country; for no public man ever stood forth "so clear in his great office," more essentially useful in affairs, courageous in battle, loyal in attachment, gifted in mind, or graceful in manner. During a life of varied and absorbing occupation, he found time to put on record his principles as a statesman: not always highly finished, his writings are full of sense and energy; their tone is noble, their insight often deep, and the wisdom they display remarkable. His letters are finely characteristic, his state papers valuable, and the *Federalist* a significant illustration both of his genius and the age.

The historical and literary anniversaries of such frequent occurrence in this country, and the exigencies of political life, give occasion for the exercise of oratory to educated citizens of all professions—from the statesman who fills the gaze of the world, to the village pastor and country advocate. Accordingly, a large, and, on the whole, remarkably creditable body of discourses, emanating from

the best minds of the country, have been published in collected editions, to such an extent as to constitute a decided feature of American literature. They are characteristic also as indicating the popular shape into which intellectual labors naturally run in a young and free country, and the fugitive and occasional literary efforts which alone are practicable for the majority even of scholars. The most solid of this class of writings are the productions of statesmen; and of these, three are conspicuous, although singularly diverse both in style and cast of thought—Webster, (Calhoun,) and (Clay.) Webster's oration at Plymouth in 1820; his address at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument, half a century after the battle; his discourse on the deaths of Adams and Jefferson, the following year; and his reply to Hayne, in the U. S. Senate, in 1829, are memorable specimens of oratory, and recognized everywhere as among the greatest instances of genius in this branch of letters in modern times. These are, however, but a very small part of his speeches and forensic arguments, which constitute a permanent and characteristic, as well as intrinsically valuable and interesting portion of our native literature.

✕ **Daniel Webster** (1782–1852) was the son of a New Hampshire farmer (85). He was born in 1782, graduated at Dartmouth College, and began the practice of law at a village near Salisbury, his birthplace, but removed to Portsmouth in 1807. He soon distinguished himself at the bar, and as a member of the House of Representatives; retired from Congress and removed to Boston in 1817; and by his able arguments in the Supreme Court, as well as his unrivalled eloquence on special occasions, was very soon acknowledged to be one of the greatest men America had produced. His career as a senator, a foreign minister, and secretary of state, was no less illustrious than his professional triumphs; but, as far as literature is concerned, he will be remembered by his state papers and speeches. His style is remarkable for great clearness of statement. It is singularly emphatic. Clearness of statement, vigor of reasoning, and a faculty of making a question plain to the understanding by the mere terms in which it is presented, are the traits which uniformly distinguish his writings, evident alike in a diplomatic note, a legislative debate, and an historical discourse. His dignity of expression, breadth of view, and force of thought, realize the ideal of a republican statesman, in regard, at least, to

natural endowments; and his presence and manner, in the prime of his life, were analogous.

In the speeches of **Henry Clay** (1777-1852) (80) there is a chivalric freshness which readily explains his great popularity as a man; not so profound as Webster, he is far more rhetorical and equally patriotic. The mind of **John Caldwell Calhoun** (1782-1850) had that precise energy which is so effectual in debate; his style of argument is concise; and in personal aspect he was quite as remarkable—the incarnation of intense purpose and keen perception. These and many other eminent men have admirably illustrated that department of oratory which belongs to statesmen.

Fisher Ames (68), William Wirt, John Quincy Adams (78), and others, famed as debaters, have united to this distinction the renown of able rhetoricians on literary and historical occasions; and to these we may add the names of Verplanck, Chief Justice Story, Chancellor Kent, Rufus Choate (92), and many other authors of occasional addresses, having, by their scope of thought or beauty of style, a permanent literary value. The most voluminous writer in this department, however, is **Edward Everett** (1794-1865) (190)X His volumes not only exhibit the finest specimens of rhetorical writing, but they also truly represent the cultivated American mind in literature. Edward Everett's *Orations* are as pure in style, as able in statement, and as authentic as expressions of popular history, feeling, and opinion in a finished and elegant shape, as were those of Demosthenes and Cicero in their day. They embody the results of long and faithful research into the most important facts of our history; they give "a local habitation and a name" to the most patriotic associations; their subjects, not less than their sentiments, are thoroughly national; not a page but glows with the most intelligent love of country, nor a figure, description, or appeal but what bears evidence of scholarship, taste, and just sentiment. The great battles of the revolution, the sufferings and principles of the early colonists, the characters of our leading statesmen, the progress of arts, sciences, and education among us—all those great interests which are characteristic, to the philosopher, of a nation's life—are here expounded, now by important facts, now by eloquent illustrations, and again in the form of impressive and graceful comments. History, essays, descriptive sketches, biographical data.

picturesque detail, and general principles, are all blent together with a tact, a distinctness, a felicity of expression, and a unity of style unexampled in this species of writing. The old should grow familiar with their pages to keep alive the glow of enlightened patriotism; and the young to learn a wise love of country and the graces of refined scholarship.

Edward Everett, after the issue of three substantial volumes of orations, which, in view of both topics and treatment, may be justly regarded as of national value and significance, at the age of sixty traversed the United States to deliver his oration on the character of Washington, for the twofold patriotic purpose of allaying the sectional animosity which afterwards culminated in civil war, and to raise the funds requisite for the purchase of Mount Vernon—the home and tomb of Washington. During the civil conflict the eloquent voice and pen of Everett were constantly pleading and protesting for the Union, and, crowned with this final work of honor and patriotism, he died on the 15th of January, 1865.

There is no branch of literature that can be cultivated in a republic with more advantage to the reader, and satisfaction to the author, than History. Untrammelled by proscription, and unawed by political authority, the annalist may trace the events of the past, and connect them, by philosophical analogy, with the tendencies of the present, free to impart the glow of honest conviction to his record, to analyze the conduct of leaders, the theory of parties, and the significance of events. The facts, too, of our history are comparatively recent. It is not requisite to conjure up fabulous traditions, or explore the dim regions of antiquity. From her origin the nation was civilized. A backward glance at the state of Europe, the causes of emigration, and the standard of political and social advancement at the epoch of the first colonies in North America, is all that we need to start intelligently upon the track of our country's marvellous growth, and brief, though eventful career. There are relations, however, both to the past and future, which render American history the most suggestive episode in the annals of the world, and give it a universal as well as special dignity. To those who chiefly value facts as illustrative of principles, and see in the course of events the grand problem of humanity, the occurrences in the New World, from its discovery to the present hour, offer a comprehensive interest unrecognized by those who only



regard details. Justly interpreted, the liberty and progress of mankind, illustrated by the history of the United States, are but the practical demonstration of principles which the noblest spirits of England advocated with their pens, and often sealed with their blood. It is through an intimate and direct relation with the past of the Old World, and as initiative to her ultimate self-enfranchisement, that our history daily grows in value and interest, unfolds new meaning, and becomes endeared to all thinking men. It is a link between two great cycles of human progress; the ark that, floating safely on the ocean-tide of humanity, preserves those elements of national freedom which are the vital hope of the world.

The labors of American historians have been, for the most part, confined to the acquisition of materials, the unadorned record of facts; their subjects have been chiefly local; and in very few cases have their labors derived any charm from the graces of style, or the resources of philosophy; they are usually crude memoranda of events, not always reliable, though often curious. In a few instances care and scholarship render such contributions to American history intrinsically valuable; but, taken together, they are rather materials for the annalist than complete works, and as such will prove of considerable value. It is to collect and preserve these and other records that historical societies have been formed in so many of the states. A storehouse of data is thus formed, to which the future historian can resort; and probably the greater part of the local narratives is destined either to be re-written with all the amenities of literary tact and refinement, or, cast in the mould of genius, become identified with the future triumphs of the American novelist and poet. In the mean time, all honor is due to those who have assiduously labored to record the great events which have here occurred, and to preserve the memories of our patriots. **Jared Sparks** (1794-1866) (124), late president of Harvard University, has labored most effectually in this sphere. In a series of well-written biographies, and in the collected Letters of Washington and Franklin, which he has edited, we have a rich fund of national material. Nor should the "Archives" of the venerable Peter Force be forgotten.

Among the earliest and most indefatigable laborers in the field of history was Ramsay. His *Historical View of the World, from the*

*earliest Record to the Nineteenth Century, with a Particular Reference to the State of Society, Literature, Religion, and Form of Government of the United States of America*, was published in 1819; a previous work early in 1817; and more than forty years, during intervals of leisure in an active life, were thus occupied by a man not more remarkable for mental assiduity than for all the social graces and solid excellences of human character.

**Dr. David Ramsay** (1749-1815) (114), a native of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, was the son of an Irish emigrant. After graduating at Princeton College, and, according to the custom of the period, devoting two years to private tuition, he studied medicine, and removed to Charleston, South Carolina, where he soon became a distinguished patriotic writer. He was a surgeon in the American army, and active in the councils of the land, suffering, with other votaries of independence, the penalty of several months' banishment to St. Augustine. He earnestly opposed, in the legislature of the state, the confiscation of loyalist property. In 1782 he became a member of the Continental Congress; he three years after represented the Charleston district, and for a year was president of that body, in the absence of Hancock. He died in 1815, in consequence of wounds received from the pistol of a maniac. Remarkable for a conciliatory disposition and ardent patriotism, he was a fluent speaker, and a man of great literary industry. Besides a *History of the Revolution in South Carolina*, which was translated and published in France, a *(History of the American Revolution)* which reached a second edition, a *(Life of Washington)*, and a *History of South Carolina*, he left a *History of the United States*, from their first settlement to the year 1808,—a monument of his unwearied and zealous research, and patient labor for the good of the public, and the honor of his country.

The most successful attempt yet made to reduce the chaotic but rich materials of American history to order, beauty, and moral significance, is the work of **George Bancroft** (1800-~~X~~) (129). This author was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the year 1800; he is the son of Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D. D., for more than half a century minister of that town, a man highly venerated, and devoted to historical research, particularly as regards his native country. Thus under the paternal roof, and from his earliest age, the sympathies and taste of the son were awakened to the subject

of American history. The inadequate history of Judge Marshall, and the careful one relating to the colonial period by Grahame, were previously the only works devoted to the subject. Our revolution, in its most interesting details, was known in Europe chiefly through the attractive pages of Carlo Botta. With the ground thus unoccupied, Mr. Bancroft commenced his labors. He was prepared for them not only by culture and talent, but by an earnest sympathy with the spirit of the age he was to illustrate. Having passed through the discipline of a brilliant scholastic career at the best university in the country, studied theology, and engaged in the classical education of youth, he had also visited Europe, and become imbued with the love of German literature; he was for two years a pupil of Heeren, at Gottingen, and mingled freely with the learned coteries of Berlin and Heidelberg. His two first published works, after his return to the United States, are remarkably suggestive of his traits of mind, and indicate that versatility which is so desirable in an historian. These were a small volume of metrical pieces, mainly expressive of his individual feelings and experience; and a translation of Professor Heeren's *Reflections on the Politics of Ancient Greece*: thus early both the poetic and the philosophic elements were developed; and although, soon after, Mr. Bancroft entered actively into political life, and held several high offices under the general government, including that of minister to Great Britain, he continued to prosecute his historical researches, under the most favorable auspices, both at home and abroad, and from time to time put forth the successive volumes of the *History of the United States*. To this noble task he brought great and patient industry, an eloquent style, and a capacity to array the theme in the garb of philosophy. Throughout he is the advocate of democratic institutions; and in the early volumes, where, by the nature of the subject, there is little scope for attractive detail, by infusing a reflective tone, he rescues the narrative from dryness and monotony. But it is the under-current of thought, rather than the brilliant surface of description, which gives intellectual value to Bancroft's *History*, and has secured for it so high and extensive a reputation. In sentiment and principles it is thoroughly American; but in its style and philosophy it has that broad and eclectic spirit appropriate both to the general interest of the subject and the enlightened sympathies of the age. Nine volumes of the work are pub-

lished. The first three narrate the settlement of the Colonies, the next three explain the estrangement from the mother country, and the last three tell the story of the war for Independence.

A *History of the United States*, by **Richard Hildreth** (1807-1865), will probably become a standard book of reference. Rhetorical grace and effect, picturesqueness and the impress of individual opinion, are traits which the author either rejects or keeps in abeyance. His narrative is plain and straightforward, confined to facts which he seems to have gleaned with great care and conscientiousness. The special merit of his work consists in the absence of whatever can possibly be deemed either irrelevant or ostentatious. A *History of Liberty*, by **Samuel Eliot** (1821- ), is the work of scholarship and taste, but not of poetic inspiration or philosophy; it is, however, an elegant addition to our native writings in this sphere. In a popular form, the most creditable performance is the (*Field-Book of the Revolution*), by **Benson J. Lossing** (1813- ) ( ), a wood-engraver by profession, who has visited all the scenes of that memorable war, and, with pen and pencil, delineated each incident of importance, and every object of local interest. His work is one which is destined to find its way to every farmer's hearth and to all the school libraries of our country.

X The freshness of his subjects, the beauty of his style, and the vast difficulties he bravely surmounted, gained for **William Hickling Prescott** (1796-1859) not only an extensive but a remarkably speedy reputation, after the appearance of his first history (126). He was the grandson of Colonel William Prescott, who commanded the Americans at the battle of Bunker Hill. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on the 4th of May, 1796. Educated in boyhood by Dr. Gardiner, a fine classical teacher, he entered Harvard College in 1814. He studied law, and passed two years in Europe. In 1838 was published his *History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, which met with almost immediate and unprecedented success. It was soon translated into all the modern European languages. He died in Boston, January 23, 1859. Many years of study, travel, and occasional practice in writing, preceded the long-cherished design of achieving an historical fame. Although greatly impeded, at the outset, by a vision so imperfect as to threaten absolute blindness, in other respects he was singularly fortunate. Unlike the majority of intellectual aspirants, he had at his command the means to procure the

needful but expensive materials for illustrating a subject more prolific, at once, of romantic charms and great elements of human destiny, than any unappropriated theme offered by the whole range of history. It included the momentous voyage of Columbus, the fall of the Moorish empire in Spain, and the many and eventful consequences thence resulting. Aided by the researches of our minister at Madrid,\* himself an enthusiast in letters, Mr. Prescott soon possessed himself of ample documents and printed authorities. These he caused to be read to him, and during the process dictated notes, which were afterwards so frequently repeated orally that his mind gradually possessed itself of all the important details; and these he clothed in his own language, arranged them with discrimination, and made out a consecutive and harmonious narrative. Tedious as such a course must be, and laborious in the highest degree as it proved, I am disposed to attribute to it, in a measure at least, some of Mr. Prescott's greatest charms as a historian—the remarkable evenness and sustained harmony, the unity of conception and ease of manner, as rare as it is delightful. The *History of Ferdinand and Isabella* is a work that unites the fascination of romantic fiction with the grave interest of authentic events. Its author makes no pretension to analytical power, except in the arrangement of his materials; he is content to describe, and his talents are more artistic than philosophical; neither is any cherished theory or principle obvious; his ambition is apparently limited to skilful narration. Indefatigable in research, sagacious in the choice and comparison of authorities, serene in temper, graceful in style, and pleasing in sentiment, he possesses all the requisites for an agreeable writer; while his subjects have yielded so much of picturesque material and romantic interest, as to atone for the lack of any more original or brilliant qualities in the author. *Ferdinand and Isabella* was followed by *The Conquest of Mexico* and *The Conquest of Peru*. The scenic descriptions and the portraits of the Spanish leaders, and of Montezuma and Guatimozin, in the former work, give to it all the charm of an effective romance. Few works of imagination have more power to win the fancy and touch the heart. The insight afforded into Aztec civilization is another source of interest. Prescott's last historical work, *Philip II.*, was left unfinished.

\* Alexander H. Everett.

**John Lothrop Motley** (1814- ) has gained a European reputation by his *Rise of the Dutch Republic, and History of the United Netherlands*,—works of elaborate research and artistic finish, written with an earnest sympathy in the struggles of those who laid the foundations of civil and religious freedom, and with a force and grace of style both appropriate and attractive. A valuable addition to this department also is the *History of New England*, by **John Gorham Palfrey** (1796- ), wherein is evident much original research and a more comprehensive and vivid treatment than had before been given to the subject. In the sphere of philology and economical science, **George P. Marsh** (1801- ) has written with erudition and efficiency; his *Origin and History of the English Language*, his *Lectures on the English Language*, and his treatise entitled *Man and Nature*, have been recognized as singularly able and suggestive works on both sides of the ocean. In popular biography James Parton has won distinction by the thoroughness of his investigation, and the dramatic form of his delineation; his lives of Burr, Jackson, and Franklin are read and relished by thousands.

Another of the few standard works in this department, of native origin, is the *Life and Voyages of Columbus*, by **Washington Irving** (181). Ostensibly a biography, it partakes largely of the historical character. As in the case of Prescott, the friendly suggestions of our minister at Madrid greatly promoted the enterprise. The work is based on the researches of Navarette, and it is a highly fortunate circumstance that the crude though invaluable data thus gathered were first put in shape and adorned with the elegances of a polished diction, by an American writer at once so popular and so capable as Irving. The result is a *Life of Columbus*, authentic, clear, and animated in narration, graphic in its descriptive episodes, and sustained and finished in style. It is a permanent contribution to English as well as American literature,—one which was greatly needed, and most appropriately supplied.

**Henry Wheaton** (1785–1848), long our minister at Berlin, is chiefly known to literary fame by his able *Treatise on International Law*; but, while *chargé d'affaires* in Denmark, he engaged with zeal in historical studies, and published in London, in 1831, a *History of the Northmen*, a most curious, valuable, and suggestive, though limited work.

James Fenimore Cooper's ( ) *Naval History of the United States*, although not so complete as is desirable, is a most interesting work, abounding in scenes of generous valor and rare excitement, recounted with the tact and spirit which the author's taste and practice so admirably fitted him to exhibit on such a theme. Some of the descriptions of naval warfare are picturesque and thrilling in the highest degree. The work, too, is an eloquent appeal to patriotic sentiment and national pride. It is one of the most characteristic histories, both in regard to subject and style, yet produced in America.

One of the most satisfactory of historical works is *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, by Francis Parkman (1823- ) (145), of Boston. During a tour in the Far West, where he hunted the buffalo and fraternized with the Indians, the author gained that practical knowledge of aboriginal habits and character which enabled him to delineate the subject chosen with singular truth and effect. Having faithfully explored the annals of the French and Indian war, he applied to its elucidation the vivid impressions derived from his sojourn in forest and prairie, his observation of Indian life, and his thorough knowledge of the history of the Red Men. The result is not only a reliable and admirably planned narrative, but one of the most picturesque and romantic yet produced in America. Few subjects are more dramatic and rich in local associations; and the previous discipline and excellent style of the author have imparted to it a permanent attraction. *Pioneers of France in the New World* is a charming historical narrative from the same pen.

Feb. 14. 84.

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## CHAPTER II.

Belles Lettres. Influence of British Essayists. FRANKLIN. DENNIE. Signs of Literary Improvement. JONATHAN OLDSTYLE. WASHINGTON IRVING. His Knickerbocker. Sketch-Book. His other Works. Popularity. Tour on the Prairies. Character as an Author. DANA. WILDE. HUDSON. GRISWOLD. LOWELL. WHIPPLE. TICKNOR. WALKER. WAYLAND. JAMES. EMERSON. Transcendentalists. MADAME OSSOLI. Emerson's Essays. ORVILLE DEWEY. Humorous Writers. Belles Lettres. TUDOR. WIRT. SANDS. FAY. WALSH. MITCHELL. KIMBALL. American Travellers. Causes of their Success as Writers. Fiction. CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN. His Novels. JAMES FENIMORE COOPER. His Novels—their Popularity and Characteristics. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. His Works and Genius. Other American Writers of Fiction.

THE colloquial and observant character given to English literature by the wits, politicians, and essayists of Queen Anne's time, the social and agreeable phase which the art of writing exhibited in the form of the *Spectator*, *Guardian*, *Tatler*, and other popular works of the kind, naturally found imitators in the American colonies. The earliest indication of a taste for belles lettres is the republication, in the newspapers of New England, of some of the fresh lucubrations of Steele and Addison. *The Lay Preacher*, by Joseph Dennie (1768-1812) ( ), was the first successful imitation of this fashionable species of literature: more characteristic, however, of the sound common sense and utilitarian instincts of the people, were the *Essays* of Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) (13), commenced in his brother's journal, then newly established at Boston. Taste for the amenities of intellectual life, however, at this period, was chiefly gratified by recourse to the emanations of the British press; and it is some years after that we perceive signs of that native impulse in this sphere which proved the germ of American literature. "If we are not mistaken in the signs of the times," says Buckminster (in an oration delivered at Cambridge, and published in the *Anthology*, a Boston magazine, which, with the *Port Folio*, issued at Philadelphia, were the first literary



journals of high aims in America), "the genius of our literature begins to show symptoms of vigor, and to meditate a bolder flight. The spirit of criticism begins to plume itself, and education, as it assumes a more learned form, will take a higher aim. If we are not misled by our hopes, the dream of ignorance is at least broken, and there are signs that the period is approaching when we may say of our country, *Tuus jam regnat Apollo*." This prophecy had received some confirmation in the grace and local observation manifest in a series of letters which appeared in the *New York Chronicle*, signed Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.—the first productions of **Washington Irving** (1783–1859) (**178**), the Goldsmith of America, who was born in New York, April 6, 1783. In his early manhood symptoms of alarming disease induced a voyage to Europe. He returned to the Island of Manhattan, the scene of his boyish rambles and youthful reveries, with a mind expanded by new scenes, and his natural love of travel and elegant literature deepened. Although ostensibly a law student in the office of Judge Hoffman, his time was devoted to social intercourse with his kindred, who were established in business in New York, and a few genial companions, to meditative loiterings in the vicinity of the picturesque river so dear to his heart, and to writing magazine papers. The happy idea of a humorous description of his native town, under the old Dutch governors, was no sooner conceived than executed with inimitable wit and originality. Not then contemplating the profession of letters, he did not take advantage of the remarkable success that attended this work, of which Sir Walter Scott thus speaks in one of his letters to an American friend: "I beg you to accept my best thanks for the uncommon degree of entertainment which I have received from the most excellently jocose history of New York. I am sensible that as a stranger to American parties and politics, I must lose much of the concealed satire of the piece; but I must own that, looking at the simple and obvious meaning only, I have never read anything so closely resembling the style of Dean Swift as the annals of Diedrich Knickerbocker. I have been employed these few evenings in reading them aloud to Mrs. S. and two ladies who are our guests, and our sides have been absolutely sore with laughing. I think, too, there are passages which indicate that the author possesses power of a different kind, and has some touches which remind me much of Sterne." *Salmagundi*, which Mr. Irving

had previously undertaken, in conjunction with Paulding, proved a hit, and established the fame of its authors; it was in form and method of publication imitated from the *Spectator*, but in details, spirit, and aim, so exquisitely adapted to the latitude of New York, that its appearance was hailed with a delight hitherto unknown; it was, in fact, a complete triumph of local genius. From these pursuits, the author turned to commercial toil, in connection with which he embarked for England in 1815: and while there, a reverse of fortune led to his resuming the pen as a means of subsistence. In his next work, the *Sketch-Book*, Sir Walter's opinion of his pathetic vein was fully realized; *The Wife, the Pride of the Village*, and *The Broken Heart*, at once took their places as gems of English sentiment and description. Nor were the associations of home inoperative; and the (*Legend of Sleepy Hollow*) first gave a "local habitation," in our fresh land, to native fancy. His impressions of domestic life in Great Britain were soon after given to the public in (*Bracebridge Hall*), and some of his continental experiences embodied in the *Tales of a Traveller*. Soon after, Mr. Irving visited Spain to write the *Life of Columbus*, to which we have before alluded. His sojourn at the Alhambra, and at Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey, are the subjects of other graceful and charming volumes; while *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains*, and the *Life of Mohammed*, proved solid as well as elegant contributions to our standard literature; and the *Life of Washington*, a standard national biography.

The *Tour on the Prairies* appeared in 1836. It is an unpretending account, comprehending a period of about four weeks, of travelling and hunting excursions upon the vast western plains. The local features of this interesting region have been displayed to us in several works of fiction, of which it has formed the scene; and more formal illustrations of the extensive domain denominated The West, and its denizens, have been repeatedly presented to the public. But in this volume one of the most extraordinary and attractive portions of the great subject is discussed, not as the subsidiary part of a romantic story, nor yet in the desultory style of epistolary composition, but in the deliberate, connected form of a retrospective narration. When we say that the *Tour on the Prairies* is rife with the characteristics of its author, no ordinary eulogium is bestowed. His graphic power is manifest throughout. The bound-

less prairies stretch out illimitably to the fancy, as the eye scans his descriptions. The athletic figures of the riflemen, the gayly arrayed Indians, the heavy buffalo, and the graceful deer, pass in strong relief and startling contrast before us. We are stirred by the bustle of the camp at dawn, and soothed by its quiet or delighted with its picturesque aspect under the shadow of night. The imagination revels amid the green oak clumps and verdant pea vines, the expanded plains and the glancing river, the forest aisles, and the silent stars. Nor is this all. Our hearts thrill at the vivid representations of a primitive and excursive existence; we involuntarily yearn, as we read, for the genial activity and the perfect exposure to the influences of Nature in all her free magnificence, of a woodland and adventurous life; the morning strain of the bugle, the excitement of the chase, the delicious repast, the forest gossiping, the sweet repose beneath the canopy of heaven—how inviting, as depicted by such a pencil!

Nor has the author failed to invigorate and render doubly attractive these descriptive drawings, with the peculiar light and shade of his own rich humor, and the mellow softness of his ready sympathy. A less skilful draughtsman would, perhaps, in the account of the preparations for departure, have spoken of the hunters, the fires, and the steeds—but who, except Geoffrey Crayon, as Irving styled himself, would have been so quaintly mindful of the little dog, and the manner in which he regarded the operations of the farrier? How inimitably the Bee Hunt is portrayed! and what have we of the kind so racy as the account of the Republic of Prairie Dogs, unless it be that of the Rookery in *Bracebridge Hall*? What expressive portraits are the delineations of our rover's companions! How consistently drawn throughout, and in what fine contrast, are the reserved and saturnine Beattie, and the vain-glorious, sprightly, and versatile Tonish! A golden vein of vivacious, yet chaste comparison, well-managed wit, a wholesome and pleasing sprinkling of moral comment—intertwine and vivify the main narrative. Something, too, of that fine pathos which enriches his earlier productions, enhances the value of the present. He tells us, indeed, with commendable honesty, of his new appetite for destruction, which the game of the prairie excited; but we cannot fear for the tenderness of a heart that sympathizes so readily with suffering, and yields so gracefully to kindly impulses. He gazes

upon the noble courser of the wilds, and wishes that his freedom may be perpetuated; he recognizes the touching instinct which leads the wounded elk to turn aside and die in retracy; he reciprocates the attachment of the beast which sustains him, and, more than all, can minister even to the foibles of a fellow-being rather than mar the transient reign of human pleasure.

Washington Irving's last days were passed at his congenial home, "Sunnyside," on the banks of his favorite river, the Hudson. To the revised edition of his works he added many Spanish legends, home sketches, and his elaborate biography of Washington. After so many years passed abroad, and his residence as American minister at the Court of Spain, and after so long and prosperous a literary, and so genial and endeared a social, career, he died, at the age of seventy-six, surrounded by his kindred, to whom he was the lifelong benefactor, crowned with honorable fame and with the affection of his countrymen.

It has been said that Mr. Irving, at one period of his life, seriously proposed to himself the profession of an artist. The idea was a legitimate result of his intellectual constitution; and although he denied its development in one form, in another it has fully vindicated itself. Many of his volumes are a collection of sketches, embodied happily in language, since thereby their more general enjoyment is insured, but susceptible of immediate transfer to the canvas of the painter. These are like a fine gallery of pictures, wherein all his countrymen delight in many a morning lounge and evening reverie.

Within the last half century, a number of critics, endowed with acute perceptions and eloquent expression, as well as the requisite knowledge, have arisen to elucidate the tendencies, define the traits, and advocate the merits of modern writers. By faithful translations, able reviews, lectures, and essays, the best characteristics of men of literary genius, schools of philosophy, poetry, and science have been rendered familiar to the cultivated minds of the nation. Thus Richard H. Dana has explored and interpreted, with a rare sympathetic intelligence, the old English drama; Andrews Norton, the authenticity of the Gospels; Richard H. Wilde, the love and madness of Tasso; Alexander H. Everett, the range of contemporary French and German literature; Professor Reed, the poetry of Wordsworth; Henry N. Hudson, the plays of Shakespeare; John

S. Hart, the Faery Queen; Russell Lowell, the older British poets; and Edwin P. Whipple, the best authors of Great Britain and America. Our numerous "*Female Prose Writers*" have also found an intelligent and genial historian and critic in Professor Hart.

For the chief critical and biographical history of literature in the United States, we are indebted to E. A. and George Duyekinck's *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, two copious and interesting volumes, popular at home and useful abroad, giving an elaborate account of what has been done by American writers from the foundation of the country to the present hour.

The philosophic acuteness, animated and fluent diction, and thorough knowledge of the subjects discussed, render the critical essays of **Edwin Percy Whipple** (born 1819) (230) the most agreeable reading of the kind. His reputation as an eloquent and sagacious critic is now firmly established. Both in style and thought these critical essays are worthy of the times; bold without extravagance, refined, yet free of dilettanteism, manly and philosophic in sentiment, and attractive in manner. The most elaborate single work, however, in the history of literature, is **George Ticknor's** (1791-1871) *History of Spanish Literature* (187), the result of many years' research, and so complete and satisfactory, that the best European critics have recognized it a permanent authority; it is both authentic and tasteful; the translations are excellent, the arrangement judicious, and the whole performance a work of genuine scholarship. It supplies a desideratum, and is an interesting and thorough exposition of a subject at once curious, attractive, and of general literary utility. **James Walker** (born 1805) and **Francis Wayland** (1796-1865), although of widely diverse theological opinions, are both expositors of moral philosophy, to which they have made valuable contributions. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (199), by a certain quaintness of diction and boldly speculative turn of mind, has achieved a wide popularity. It is, however, to a peculiar verbal facility and aphoristic emphasis, rather than to any constructive genius, that he owes the impression he creates. *Letters & Social Aims*

Whoever turns to Emerson's *Essays*, or to the writings of **Margaret Fuller Ossoli** (1810-1850) ( ), (whose remarkable acquirements, moral courage, and tragic fate, render her name prominent among our female authors), for a system, a code, or even a

set of definite principles, will be disappointed. The chief good thus far achieved by this class of thinkers has been negative; they have emancipated many minds from the thralldom of local prejudices and prescriptive opinion, but have failed to reveal any positive and satisfactory truth unknown before. Emerson has an inventive fancy; he knows how to clothe truisms in startling costume; he evolves beautiful or apt figures and apothegms that strike at first, but when contemplated, prove, as has been said, usually either true and not new, or new and not true. His volumes, however, are suggestive, tersely and often gracefully written; they are thoughtful, observant, and speculative, and indicate a philosophic taste rather than power. As contributions to American literature, they have the merit of a spirit, beauty, and reflective tone previously almost undiscoverable in the didactic writings of the country.

During his life, **Henry D. Thoreau (231)** was intimately known and highly esteemed by a few literary neighbors and friends, including Emerson and Hawthorne. It was not until after his death, which occurred in 1862, that his peculiar traits were generally recognized through his writings. He aspired to a life of frugal independence and moral isolation, and carried out the desire with singular heroism and patience. His experience as a hermit on the Concord River, his observant excursions to the woods of Maine, the sands of Cape Cod, and other native scenes, rarely explored by such curious and loving eyes, have a remarkable freshness of tone and fulness of detail; while on themes of a social and political nature his comments are those of a bold and ardent reformer. Few books possess a more genuine American scope and flavor than Thoreau's.

We have not been wanting in excellent translators, especially of German literature; our scholars and poets have admirably used their knowledge of the language in this regard. The first experiment was Bancroft's translation of Heeren, already referred to; and since then, some of the choicest lyrics and best philosophy of Germany have been given to the American public by Professor Longfellow, George Ripley, Charles T. Brooks, R. W. Emerson, and others.

The most elaborate piece of humor in our literature has been already mentioned—Irving's facetious history of his native town. The sketch entitled *The Stout Gentleman*, by the same genial author, is another inimitable attempt in miniature, as well as some of the

papers in *Salmagundi*. The *Letters of Jack Downing* may be considered an indigenous specimen in this department; and also the *Charcoal Sketches* of Joseph C. Neal, the *Ollapodiana* of Willis G. Clarke, the *Puffer Hopkins* of Cornelius Matthews, and many scenes by Thorpe, in Mrs. Kirkland's *New Home*, and the *Biglow Papers* of J. R. Lowell. The original aspects of life in the West and South, as well as those of New England, have also found several apt and graphic delineators; although the coarseness of the subjects, or the carelessness of the style, will seldom allow them a literary rank.

That delightful species of literature which is neither criticism nor fiction—neither oratory nor history—but partakes somewhat of all these, and owes its charm to a felicitous blending of fact and fancy, of sentiment and thought—the belles-lettres writing of our country, has gradually increased as the ornamental has encroached on the once arbitrary domain of the useful. Among the earliest specimens were the *Letters of a British Spy* and the *Old Bachelor* of William Wirt, and Tudor's *Letters on New England*: this sphere was gracefully illustrated by Robert C. Sands and Theodore S. Fay, in tale, novelette, and essay; by Robert Walsh, who gleaned two volumes from his newspaper articles; by the *Reveries of a Bachelor*, *My Farm at Edgewood*, and *Wet Days at Edgewood*, of Mitchell, and the contributions of N. P. Willis, and in a more vigorous manner in the *St. Leger Papers* of Kimball.\*

The literature of no country is more rich in books of travel. From Carter's *Letters from Europe*, Dwight's *Travels in New England*, and Lewis and Clark's (*Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*), to

\* There are a few American books which cannot be strictly classified under either of these divisions, which not only have a sterling value, but a wide and established reputation, such as the *Legal Commentaries* of Chancellor Kent; the *Dictionary* of Noah Webster; Dr. Rush's *Treatise on the Philosophy of the Human Voice*; *Lectures on Art*, by Washington Allston; the *Classical Manuals* by Professor Anthon, and Rev. P. Bullions, D. D.; Dr. Bowditch's translation of the *Mécanique Céleste* of La Place; the *Ornithology* of Wilson and Audubon; Catlin's and Schoolcraft's works on the Indians;—the ethnological contributions of Squier, Pickering's philological researches, and the essays on political economy by Albert Gallatin, Ragnet, Dr. Cooper, Tucker, Colton, Wayland, Middleton, Raymond, A. H. Everett, Horace Greeley, and Henry C. Carey. Francis Bowen has published able lectures on metaphysical subjects. James D. Nourse, of Kentucky, has published a clever little treatise, the *Philosophy of History*; Dr. Palfrey, of Massachusetts, a series of erudite lectures on Jewish antiquities; J. Q. Adams a course on rhetoric; Judge Buell and Henry Colman valuable works on agriculture, and A. J. Downing on rural architecture and horticulture.

the *Yucatan* of Stephens, and the *Two Years before the Mast* of Dana, American writers have put forth a succession of animated, intelligent, and most agreeable records of their explorations in every part of the globe. In many instances, their researches have been directed to a special object, and have resulted in positive contributions to natural science; thus Audubon's travels are associated with his discoveries in ornithology, and those of Schoolcraft with his Indian lore. Stephens revealed to our gaze the singular and magnificent ruins of Central America; Sanderson unfolded the hygiene of life in Paris; Flint guided our steps through the fertile valleys of the West, and Irving and Hoffman brought its scenic wonders home to the coldest fancy.\*

Romantic fiction, in the United States, took its rise with the publication of *Wieland* by Brown, in 1798; attained its most complete and characteristic development in the long and brilliant career, as a novelist, of James Fenimore Cooper ( ), and was afterwards represented, in its artistic excellence, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. **Charles Brockden Brown** (1771-1810) was born in Philadelphia. An invalid from infancy, he had the dreamy moods and roaming propensity incident to poetical sympathies; after vainly attempting to interest his mind in the law, he became an author, at a period and under circumstances which afford the best evidence that the vocation was ordained by his idiosyncrasy. With the encouragement of a few cultivated friends in New York to sustain him, with narrow means and feeble health, he earnestly pursued his lonely career, inspired by the enthusiasm of genius. His literary toil was varied, erudite, and indefatigable. He edited

\* It is difficult to enumerate the works in this department; but among them may be justly commended, either for graces of style, effective description, or interesting narrative,—and, in some instances, for all these qualities combined,—the *Year in Spain* of Mackenzie, the *Winter in the West* of C. F. Hoffman, the *Oregon Trail* of Francis Parkman, the *Pencillings by the Way* of Willis, the *Scenes and Thoughts in Europe* of George H. Calvert, Longfellow's *Outer-mer*, the *Typee* of Melville, the *Views Afoot* of Taylor, *Fresh Gleanings* by Mitchell, *Nile Notes* by George Curtis, Squier's *Nicaragua*, and the writings of this kind by Robinson, Long, Melville, Jewett, Spencer, Gregg, Townsend, Fremont, Lanman, Bryant, Thorpe, Kendall, Wilson, Webber, Colton, Gillespie, Headley, Dewey, Kip, Silliman, Bigelow, Cushing, Wise, Warren, Mitchell, Cheever, Catlin, Norman, Wallis, Shaler, Ruschenberger, King, Breckenridge, Kidder, Brown, Fisk, Lyman, the *Exploring Expedition* by Wilkes, the *Dead Sea Expedition* by Lynch, and the *voyages* of Delano, Cleveland, and Coggeshall.



magazines and annual registers, wrote political essays, a geography, and a treatise on architecture, translated Volney's *Travels in the United States*, debated at clubs, journalized, corresponded, made excursions, and entered ardently into the quiet duties of the fire-side and the family. He died at the close of his thirty-ninth year. His character was singularly gentle and pure; and he was beloved, even when not appreciated. It is by his novels however, that Brown achieved renown. They are remarkable for intensity and supernaturalism. His genius was eminently psychological; Godwin is his English prototype. To the reader of the present day these writings appear somewhat limited and sketch-like; but when we consider the period of their composition, and the disadvantages under which they appeared, they certainly deserve to be ranked among the wonderful productions of the human mind. Had his works been as artistically constructed as they were profoundly conceived and ingeniously executed, they would have become standard. As it is, we recognize the rare insight and keen sensibility of the man, acknowledge his power to "awaken terror and pity," and lament the want of high finish and effective shape visible in these early and remarkable fruits of native genius.

The first successful novel by an American author was the *Spy*. A previous work, by the same author, entitled *Precaution*, had made comparatively little impression. It was strongly tinged with an English flavor, in many respects imitative, and, as it afterwards appeared, written and printed under circumstances which gave little range to the real genius of **James Fenimore Cooper** (1789-1851) ( ). In 1823, he published the *Pioneers*. In this and the novel immediately preceding it, a vein of national association was opened, an original source of romantic and picturesque interest revealed, and an epoch in our literature created. What Cooper had the bold invention to undertake he had the firmness of purpose and the elasticity of spirit to pursue with unflinching zeal. Indeed, his most characteristic trait was self-reliance. He commenced the arduous career of an author in a new country, and with fresh materials: at first, the tone of criticism was somewhat discouraging; but his appeal had been to the popular mind, and not to a literary clique, and the response was universal and sincere. From this time, he gave to the press a series of prose romances conceived with so much spirit and truth, and executed with such

fidelity and vital power, that they instantly took captive the reader. His faculty of description, and his sense of the adventurous, were the great sources of his triumph. Refinement of style, poetic sensibility, and melodramatic intensity, were elements that he ignored; but when he pictured the scenes of the forest and prairie, the incidents of Indian warfare, the vicissitudes of border life, and the phenomena of the ocean and nautical experience, he displayed a familiarity with the subjects, a keen sympathy with the characters, and a thorough reality in the delineation, which at once stamped him as a writer of original and great capacity. It is true that in some of the requisites of the novelist he was inferior to many subsequent authors in the same department. His female characters want individuality and interest, and his dialogue is sometimes forced and ineffective; but, on the other hand, he seized with a bold grasp the tangible and characteristic in his own land, and not only stirred the hearts of his countrymen with vivid pictures of colonial, revolutionary, and emigrant life, with the vast ocean and forest for its scenes, but opened to the gaze of Europe phases of human existence at once novel and exciting. The fisherman of Norway, the merchant of Bordeaux, the scholar at Frankfort, and the countess of Florence, in a brief period, all hung with delight over Cooper's daguerreotypes of the New World, transferred to their respective languages. This was no ordinary triumph. It was a rich and legitimate fruit of American genius in letters. To appreciate it we must look back upon the period when the *Spy*, the *Pioneers*, the *(Last of the Mohicans)*, the *(Pilot)*, the *(Red Rover)*, the *Wept of the Wish-ton-Wish*, the *(Water Witch)*, and the *(Prairie)* were new creations, and remember that they first revealed America to Europe through a literary medium. Cooper's youth was passed in a manner admirably fitted to develop his special talent, and provide the resources of his subsequent labors. Born in Burlington, N. J., on the 15th of September, 1789, he was early removed to the borders of Otsego Lake, where his father, Judge Cooper, erected a homestead, afterwards inhabited and long occupied by the novelist. He was prepared for college by the Rector of St. Peter's Church, in Albany, and entered Yale in 1802. Three years after, having proved an excellent classical student, and having enjoyed the intimacy of several youth afterwards eminent in the land, he left New Haven, and joined the United States navy as a midshipman. After

passing six years in the service, he resigned, married, and soon after established himself on his paternal domain, situated amid some of the finest scenery and rural attraction of his native state. Thus Cooper was early initiated into the scenes of a newly-settled country and a maritime life, with the benefit of academical training and the best social privileges. All these means of culture and development his active mind fully appreciated; his observation never slumbered, and its fruits were industriously garnered.

His nautical and Indian tales form, perhaps, the most characteristic portion of our literature. The *Bravo* is the best of his European novels, and his *Naval History* is valuable and interesting. He was one of the most industrious of authors; his books of travel and biographical sketches are numerous, and possess great fidelity of detail, although not free from prejudice. He is always thoroughly American. His style is national; and when he died in the autumn of 1851, a voice of praise and regret seemed to rise all over the land, and a large and distinguished assembly convened soon after, in New York, to listen to his eulogy—pronounced by the poet Bryant.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) ( ) was distinguished for the finish of his style and the delicacy of his psychological insight. He combines the metaphysical talent of Brown with the refined diction of Irving. For a period of more than twenty years he contributed, at intervals, to annuals and magazines, the most exquisite fancy sketches and historical narratives, the merit of which was scarcely recognized by the public at large, although cordially praised by the discriminating few. These papers have been collected under the title of *Twice-told Tales*, and *Mosses from an Old Manse*; and their grace, wisdom and originality are now generally acknowledged. But it was through the two romances entitled the *Scarlet Letter* and the *House of the Seven Gables* that Hawthorne's eminence was reached. They are remarkable at once for a highly finished and beautiful style, the most charming artistic skill, and intense characterization. To these intrinsic and universal claims they add that of native scenes and subjects. Imagine such an anatomizer of the human heart as Balzac, transported to a provincial town of New England, and giving to its houses, streets, and history the analytical power of his genius, and we realize the triumph of Hawthorne. Bravely adopting familiar materials, he has thrown

over them the light and shadow of his thoughtful mind, eliciting a deep significance and a prolific beauty; if we may use the expression, he is ideally true to the real. His invention is felicitous, his tone magnetic; his sphere borders on the supernatural, and yet a chaste expression and a refined sentiment underlie his most earnest utterance; he is more suggestive than dramatic. The early history of New England has found no such genial and vivid illustration as his pages afford. At all points his genius touches the interests of human life, now overflowing with a love of external nature as gentle as that of Thomson, now intent upon the quaint or characteristic in life with a humor as zestful as that of Lamb, now developing the horrible or pathetic with something of John Webster's dramatic terror, and again buoyant with a fantasy as aerial as Shelley's conceptions. And, in each instance, the staple of charming invention is adorned with the purest graces of style. Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, educated at Bowdoin College, and after having filled an office in the Salem custom-house, and the post-office of his native town, lived a year on a community farm. He acted as United States consul at Liverpool for several years, and was settled in the pleasant country town of Concord, Mass. He died with the pure and permanent fame of genius, having embalmed the experience he enjoyed in Italy and England in the romances of the *Marble Faun* and *Our Old Home*.

There are many intermediate authors between the three already described in this sphere of literature, of various and high degrees, both of merit and reputation, but whose traits are chiefly analogous to those of the prominent writers we have surveyed. Some of them have ably illustrated local themes, others excelled in scenic limning, and a few evinced genius for characterization. Paulding, for instance, in *Westward Ho*, and the *Dutchman's Fireside*, has given admirable pictures of colonial life; Richard H. Dana, in the *Idle Man*, has two or three remarkable psychological tales; Timothy Flint, James Hall Thomas, and more recently M'Connell, of Illinois, have written very graphic and spirited novels of western life; John P. Kennedy, of Baltimore, has embalmed Virginia life in the olden time in *Swallow Barn*, and Fay that of modern New York; Gilmore Simms, a prolific and vigorous novelist, in a similar form has embodied the traits of southern character and scenery; Hoffman, the early history of his native state; Dr. Robert Bird, of

Philadelphia, those of Mexico ; William Ware has rivalled Lockhart's classical romance in his *Letters from Palmyra*, and *Probus* ; Allston's artist-genius is luminous in *Monaldi* ; Judd in *Margaret* has related a tragic story arrayed in the very best hues and outlines of New England life ; and Edgar A. Poe (     ), in his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, evinces a genius in which a love of the marvellous and an intensity of conception are united with the wildest sympathies, as if the endowments of Mrs. Radcliffe and Coleridge were partially united in one mind. In adventurous and descriptive narration we have Melville and Mayo. John Neal struck off at a heat some half score of novels that, at least, illustrate a facility quite remarkable ; and, indeed, from the days of the *Algerine Captive* and the *Foresters*—the first attempts at such writing in this country—to the present day, there has been no lack of native fictions. The minor specimens which possess the highest literary excellence are by Irving, Willis, and Longfellow ; but their claims rest entirely on style and sentiment ; they are brief and polished, but more graceful than impressive.

**J. G. Holland** (     ) is one of the most successful of American authors, if pecuniary results and popularity may be regarded as the test. Long engaged in the editorial charge of a New England daily newspaper, and brought into intimate contact with the people, their tastes and wants seem to have been remarkably appreciated by this prolific literary purveyor thereto. He has written novels, poems, lectures, and essays, founded on or directed to the wants and tendencies of life and nature in New England, and reflecting, with great authenticity, the local peculiarities, natural phases, and characteristic qualities of the region and the people.

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### CHAPTER III.

FRENEAU and the early Metrical Writers. MUMFORD, CLIFFTON, ALLSTON, PIERPONT. DANA. HILLHOUSE. SPRAGUE. PERCIVAL. HALLECK. DRAKE. HOFFMAN. WILLIS. LONGFELLOW. HOLMES. LOWELL. BOKER. Favorite Single Poems. Descriptive Poetry. STREET, WHITTIER, and others. BRAINARD. Song-Writers. Other Poets. Female Poets. BRYANT.

THE first metrical compositions in this country, recognized by popular sympathy, were the effusions of **Phillip Freneau** (1752-1832) ( ), a political writer befriended by Jefferson. He wrote many songs and ballads in a patriotic and historical vein, which attracted and somewhat reflected the feelings of his contemporaries, and were not destitute of merit. Their success was owing, in part, to the immediate interest of the subjects, and in part to musical versification and pathetic sentiment. One of his Indian ballads has survived the general neglect to which more artistic skill and deeper significance in poetry have banished the mass of his verses; to the curious in the metrical writings, however, they yet afford a characteristic illustration of the taste and spirit of the times. The antecedent specimens of verse in America were, for the most part, the occasional work of the clergy, and are remarkable chiefly for a quaint and monotonous strain, grotesque rhymed versions of the Psalms, and tolerable attempts at descriptive poems. The writings of Mrs. Bradstreet, Governor Bradford, Roger Williams, Cotton Mather, and the witty Dr. Byles, in this department, are now only familiar to the antiquarian. Franklin's friend Ralph, and Thomas Godfrey, of Philadelphia, indicate the dawn of a more liberal era, illustrated by Trumbull, Dwight, Humphreys, Alsop, and Honeywood; passages from whose poems show a marked improvement in diction, a more refined scholarship, and genuine

sympathy with nature; but, although in a literary point of view they are respectable performances, and, for the period and locality of their composition, suggestive of a rare degree of taste, there are too few salient points, and too little of an original spirit, to justify any claim to high poetical genius. One of the most remarkable efforts in this branch of letters, at the epoch in question, was doubtless **William Mumford's** (1775-1825) translation of the *Iliad*—a work that, when published, elicited some authentic critical praise. He was a native of Virginia, and his great undertaking was finished only a short period before his death. The verses which have the earliest touch of true sensibility and that melody of rhythm which seems intuitive, are the few bequeathed by **William Clifton** (1772-1799), of Philadelphia, born in 1772. After him we trace the American muse in the patriotic songs of R. T. Paine (1773-1811) and the scenic descriptions of Paulding, until she began a loftier though brief flight in the fanciful poems of Allston.

**Washington Allston** (1779-1843) ( ), a native of South Carolina, was a painter by profession, and his works overflow with genius; still it would be difficult to say whether his pen, his pencil, or his tongue chiefly made known that he was a prophet of the true and beautiful. He believed not in any exclusive development. It was the spirit of a man, and not his dexterity or success, by which he tested character. In painting, reading, or writing, his mornings were occupied, and at night he was at the service of his friends. Beneath his humble roof, in his latter years, there were often a flow of wit, a community of mind, and a generous exercise of sympathy which kings might envy. To the eye of the multitude his life glided away in secluded contentment, yet a prevailing idea was the star of his being—the idea of beauty. For the high, the lovely, the perfect, he strove all his days. He sought them in the scenes of nature, in the masterpieces of literature and art, in habits of life, in social relations, and in love. Without pretence, without elation, in all meekness, his youthful enthusiasm chastened by suffering, he lived above the world. Gentleness he deemed true wisdom, renunciation of all the trappings of life a duty. He was calm, patient, occasionally sad, but for the most part happy in the free exercise and guardianship of his varied powers. His sonnets are interesting as records of personal feeling. They eloquently breathe sentiments of intelligent admiration or sincere friendship; while

the *Sylphs of the Season* and other longer poems show a great command of language and an exuberant fancy.

**John Pierpont** (1785-1866) ( ) wrote numerous hymns and odes for religious and national occasions, remarkable for their variety of difficult metres, and for the felicity both of the rhythm, sentiment, and expression. His *Airs of Palestine*, a long poem in heroic verse, has many eloquent passages; and several of his minor pieces, especially those entitled (*Passing Away*) and *My Child*, are striking examples of effective versification. The most popular of his occasional poems is *The Pilgrim Fathers*, an ode written for the anniversary of the landing at Plymouth, and embodying in truly musical verse the sentiment of the memorable day.

**Richard H. Dana** (1787- ) ( ) is the most psychological of American poets. His *Buccaneer* has several descriptive passages of singular terseness and beauty, although there is a certain abruptness in the metre chosen. The scenery and phenomena of the ocean are evidently familiar to his observation; the tragic and remorseful elements in humanity exert a powerful influence over his imagination; while the mysteries and aspirations of the human soul fill and elevate his mind. The result is an introspective tone, a solemnity of mood lightened occasionally by touches of pathos or beautiful pictures. There is a compactness, a pointed truth to the actual, in many of his rhymed pieces, and a high music in some of his blank verse, which suggest greater poetical genius than is actually exhibited. His taste evidently inclines to Shakespeare, Milton, and the old English dramatists, his deep appreciation of whom he has manifested in the most subtle and profound criticisms. Of his minor pieces, the *Intimations of Immortality* and *The Little Beach-Bird* are perhaps the most characteristic of his two phases of expression.

**James A. Hillhouse** (1789-1841) ( ) excelled in a species of poetic literature which afterwards attained eminence from the fine illustrations of Taylor, Browning, Horne, Talfourd, and other men of genius in England. It may be called the written drama, and, however unfit for representation, is unsurpassed for bold, noble, and exquisite sentiment and imagery. The name of Hillhouse is associated with the beautiful elms of New Haven, beneath whose majestic boughs he so often walked. His home in the neighborhood of this rural city was consecrated by ele-



vated tastes and domestic virtue. He there, in the intervals of business, led the life of a true scholar; and the memorials of this existence are his poems, *Hadad*, *The Judgment*, *Percy's Masque*, *Demetria*, and others. In the two former, his scriptural erudition and deep perceptions of the Jewish character, and his sense of religious truth, are evinced in the most carefully-finished and nobly-conceived writings. Their tone is lofty, often sublime; the language is finely chosen, and there is about them evidence of gradual and patient labor rare in American literature. On every page we recognize the Christian scholar and gentleman, the secluded bard, and the chivalric student of the past. *Percy's Masque* reproduces the features of an era more impressed with knightly character than any in the annals of England. Hillhouse moves in that atmosphere quite as gracefully as among the solemn and venerable traditions of the Hebrew faith. His dramatic and other pieces are the first instances, in this country, of artistic skill in the higher and more elaborate spheres of poetic writing. He possessed the scholarship, the leisure, the dignity of taste, and the noble sympathy requisite thus to "build the lofty rhyme;" and his volumes, though unattractive to the mass of readers, have a permanent interest and value to the refined, the aspiring, and the disciplined mind.

Charles Sprague (1791— ) ( ) has been called the Rogers of America; and there is an analogy between them in two respects—the careful finish of their verses, and their financial occupation. The American poet first attracted notice by two or three theatrical prize addresses; and his success, in this regard, attained its climax in a *Shakespeare Ode* which grouped the characters of the great poet with an effect so striking and happy, and in a rhythm so appropriate and impressive, as to recall the best efforts of Collins and Dryden united. A similar composition, more elaborate, is his ode delivered on the second centennial anniversary of the settlement of Boston, his native city. A few domestic pieces, remarkable for their simplicity of expression and truth of feeling, soon became endeared to a large circle; but the performance which has rendered Sprague best known to the country as a poet is his metrical essay on *Curiosity*, delivered in 1820 before the literary societies of Harvard University. It is written in heroic measure, and recalls the couplets of Pope. The choice of a theme was singularly fortunate. He traces the passion which "tempted Eve to sin" through its

loftiest and most vulgar manifestations; at one moment rivalling Crabbe in the lowliness of his details, and at another Campbell in the aspiration of his song. The serious and the comic alternate on every page. Good sense is the basis of the work; fancy, wit, and feeling warm and vivify it; and a nervous tone and finished versification, as well as excellent choice of words, impart a glow, polish, and grace that at once gratify the ear and captivate the mind.

**James Gates Percival** (1795–1856) ( ), was a copious writer of verses, some of which, from their even and sweet flow, their aptness of epithet and natural sentiment, have become household and school treasures; such as *The Coral Grove, New England*, and *Seneca Lake*. His command both of language and metre is remarkable; his acquirements were very extensive and various, and his life eccentric. Perhaps a facile power of expression has tended to limit his poetic fame, by inducing a diffuse, careless, and unindividual method; although choice pieces enough can easily be gleaned from his voluminous writings to constitute a just and rare claim to renown and sympathy.

The poems of **Fitz-Greene Halleck** (1795–1867) ( ), although limited in quantity, are, perhaps, the best known and most cherished, especially in the latitude of New York, of all American verses. This is owing, in no small degree, to their spirited, direct, and intelligible character, the absence of all vagueness and mysticism, and the heartfelt or humorous glow of real inspiration; and in a measure, perhaps, it can be traced to the prestige of his youthful fame, when, associated with his friend Drake, he used to charm the town with the admirable local verses that appeared in the journals of the day, under the signature of Croaker & Co. His theory of poetic expression is that of the most popular masters of English verse—manly, clear, vivid, warm with genuine emotion, or sparkling with true wit. The more recent style of metrical writing, suggestive rather than emphatic, undefined and involved, and borrowed mainly from German idealism, he utterly repudiates. All his verses have a vital meaning, and the clear ring of pure metal. They are few, but memorable. The school-boy and the old Knickerbocker both know them by heart. In his serious poems he belongs to the same school as Campbell, and in his lighter pieces reminds us of *Beppo* and the best parts of *Don Juan*. *Fanny*, conceived in the latter vein, has the point of a fine local satire grace-

fully executed. *Burns*, and the lines on the death of Drake, have the beautiful impressiveness of the highest elegiac verse. (*Marco Bozzaris*) is perhaps the best martial lyric in the language, *Red Jacket* the most effective Indian portrait, and *Twilight* an apt piece of contemplative verse; while *Albwick Castle* combines his grave and gay style with inimitable art and admirable effect. As a versifier, he was an adept in that relation of sound to sense which embalms thought in deathless melody. An unusual blending of the animal and intellectual with that full proportion essential to manhood, enables him to utter appeals that wake responses in the universal heart. An almost provoking mixture of irony and sentiment is characteristic of his genius. Born in Connecticut, his life was passed in the city of New York, and occupied in mercantile affairs. He was a conservative in taste and opinions, but his feelings are chivalric, and his sympathies ardent and loyal; and these, alternating with humor, glow and sparkle in the most spirited and harmonious lyrical compositions of the American muse.

"Centuries hence, perchance, some lover of 'The Old American Writers' will speculate as ardently as Monkbarns himself about the site of Sleepy Hollow. Then the Hudson will possess a classic interest, and the associations of genius and patriotism may furnish themes to illustrate its matchless scenery. Imagination is a perverse faculty. Why should the ruins of a feudal castle add enchantment to a knoll of the Catskills? Are not the Palisades more ancient than the aqueducts of the Roman Campagna? Can bloody tradition or superstitious legends really enhance the picturesque impression derived from West Point? The heart forever asserts its claim. Primeval nature is often coldly grand in the view of one who loves and honors his race; and the outward world is only brought near to his spirit when linked with human love and suffering, or consecrated by heroism and faith. Yet, if there ever was a stream romantic in itself, superior, from its own wild beauty, to all extraneous charms, it is the Hudson.

"It was where

'The moon looks down on old Cro'nest,  
And mellows the shade on his shaggy breast,'

*Com*  
*to*

that **Joseph Rodman Drake** (1795-1820) laid the scene of his poem, *The Culprit Fay*. The story is of simple construction. The

fairies are called together, at this chosen hour, not to join in dance or revel, but to sit in judgment on one of their number who has broken his vestal vow. Evil sprites, both of the air and water, oppose the Fay in his mission of penance. He is sadly baffled and tempted, but at length conquers all difficulties, and his triumphant return is hailed with 'dance and song, and lute and lyre.'

"There are various tastes as regards the style and spirit of different bards; but no one, having the slightest perception, will fail to realize at once that the *Culprit Fay* is a genuine poem. This is, perhaps, the highest of praise. The mass of versified compositions are *not* strictly poems. Here and there only the purely ideal is apparent. A series of poetical fragments are linked by rhymes to other and larger portions of commonplace and prosaic ideas. It is with the former as with moonbeams falling through dense foliage—they only checker our path with light. 'Poetry,' says Campbell, 'should come to us in masses of ore, that require little sifting.' The poem before us obeys this important rule. It is 'of imagination all compact.' It takes us completely away from the dull level of ordinary associations. As the portico of some beautiful temple, through it we are introduced into a scene of calm delight, where Fancy asserts her joyous supremacy, and woos us to forgetfulness of all outward evil, and to fresh recognition of the lovely in nature, and the graceful and gifted in humanity."\*

Drake's most popular poem is (*The American Flag*.)

For some of the best convivial, amatory, and descriptive poetry of native origin, we are indebted to **Charles Fenno Hoffman** (born 1806) ( ). The woods and streams, the feast and the vigil, are reflected in his verse with a graphic truth and sentiment that evidence an eye for the picturesque, a sense of the adventurous, and a zest for pleasure. He has written many admirable scenic pieces that evince not only a careful, but a loving observation of nature: some touches of this kind in the *Vigil of Faith* are worthy of the most celebrated poets. Many of his songs, from their graceful flow and tender feeling, are highly popular, although some of the metres are so like those of Moore as to provoke a comparison. They are, however, less tiuctured with artifice; and many of them have a spontaneous and natural vitality.

The Scripture pieces of **Nathaniel Parker Willis**, (1806–1867),

\* Thoughts on the Poets.

( ) although the productions of his youth, have an individual beauty that renders them choice and valuable exemplars of American genius. In his other poems there is apparent a sense of the beautiful and a grace of utterance, often an exquisite imagery, and rich tone of feeling, that emphatically announce the poet; but in the chastened and sweet, as well as picturesque elaboration of the miracles of Christ, and some of the incidents recorded in the Bible, Willis succeeded in an experiment at once bold, delicate, and profoundly interesting. *Melanie* is a narrative in verse, full of imaginative beauty and expressive music. The high finish, rare metaphors, verbal felicity, and graceful sentiment of his poems are sometimes marred by a doubtful taste that seems affectation; but where he obeys the inspiration of nature and religious sentiment, the result is truly beautiful.

*Prof. B. & A.*  
**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** (born 1807) (82) has achieved an extended reputation as a poet, for which he is chiefly indebted to his philological aptitudes and his refined taste. Trained as a verbal artist by the discipline of a poetical translator, he acquired a tact and facility in the use of words, which great natural fluency and extreme fastidiousness enabled him to use to the utmost advantage. His poems are chiefly meditative, and have that legendary significance peculiar to the German ballad. They also often embody and illustrate a moral truth. There is little or no evidence of inspiration in his verse, as that term is used to suggest the power of an overmastering passion; but there is a thoughtful, subdued feeling that seems to overflow in quiet beauty. It is, however, the manner in which this sentiment is expressed, the appositeness of the figures, the harmony of the numbers, and the inimitable choice of words that give effect to the composition. He often reminds us of an excellent mosaic worker, with his smooth table of polished marble indented to receive the precious stones that are lying at hand, which he calmly, patiently, and with exquisite art, inserts in the shape of flowers and fruit. Almost all Longfellow's poems are gems set with consummate taste. His (*Evangeline*) is a beautiful reflex of rural life and love, which, from the charm of its pictures and the gentle harmony of its sentiment, became popular, although written in hexameters. His *Skeleton in Armor* is the most novel and characteristic of his shorter poems; and his *Psalm of Life* and (*Excelsior*) are the most familiar and endeared. He is the

artistic, as Halleck is the lyrical and Bryant the picturesque and philosophical, of American poets.

The most concise, apt, and effective poet of the school of Pope this country has produced, is *Har C* Oliver Wendell Holmes (211), a Boston physician (born 1809). His best lines are a series of rhymed pictures, witticisms, or sentiments, let off with the precision and brilliancy of the scintillations that sometimes illumine the northern horizon. The significant terms, the perfect construction, and acute choice of syllables and emphasis, render some passages of Holmes absolute models of versification, especially in the heroic measure. Besides these artistic merits, his poetry abounds with fine satire, beautiful delineations of nature, and amusing caricatures of manners. The long poems are metrical essays, more pointed, musical, and judicious, as well as witty, than any that have appeared, of the same species, since the *Essay on Man* and *The Dunciad*. His description of the art in which he excels is inimitable, and illustrates all that it defines. His *Old Ironsides*—an indignant protest against the destruction of the frigate Constitution—created a public sentiment that prevented the fulfilment of that ungracious design. His verses on *Lending an Old Punch Bowl* are in the happiest vein of that form of writing. About his occasional pieces, there is an easy and vigorous tone like that of *Praed*; and some of them are the liveliest specimens of finished verse yet written among us. His command of language, his ready wit, his concise and pointed style, the nervous, bright, and wise scope of his muse, now and then softened by a pathetic touch, or animated by a living picture, are qualities that have firmly established the reputation of Dr. Holmes as a poet, while in professional character and success he has been equally recognized.

James R. Lowell (born 1819) ( ) unites, in his most effective poems, the dreamy, suggestive character of the transcendental bards with the philosophic simplicity of Wordsworth. He has written clever satires, good sonnets, long poems with fine descriptive passages, and some of the finest specimens of literary criticism that have appeared in our literature. He reminds us often of Tennyson, in the sentiment and the construction of his verse. Imagination and philanthropy are the dominant elements in his writings, some of which are marked by a graceful flow and earnest tone, and many unite with these attractions that of high finish.

**George Henry Boker** (born 1824), the author of *Calaynos*, *Anne Boleyn*, and other dramatic pieces, is a native and resident of Philadelphia. "The glow of his images is chastened by a noble simplicity, keeping them within the line of human sympathy and natural expression. He has followed the masters of dramatic writing with rare judgment. He also excels many gifted poets of his class in a quality essential to an acted play—spirit. To the tragic ability he unites aptitude for easy, colloquial, and jocose dialogue, such as must intervene in the genuine Shakespearean drama, to give relief and additional effect to high emotion. His language, also, rises often to the highest point of energy, pathos, and beauty."

A casual dalliance with the Muses is characteristic of our busy citizens, in all professions; some of these poetical estrays have a permanent hold upon the popular taste and sympathy. Among them may be mentioned Frisbie's *Castle in the Air*, Norton's *Scene after a Summer Shower*, Henry Ware's *Address to the Ursa Major*, Pinkney's verses entitled *A Heaith*, Palmer's ode to *Light*, Poe's (*Raven* and *The Bells*), Cooke's *Florence Vane*, Parsons's *Lines to a Bust of Dante*, Wilde's *My Life is like a Summer Rose*, Albert G. Greene's *Old Grimes*. Butler's (*Nothing to Wear*), and Woodworth's (*Old Oaken Bucket*) ( ).

Extensive circulation is seldom to be hoped for works which appeal so faintly to the practical spirit of our times and people as the class we have thus cursorily examined. Yet, did space allow, we should be tempted into a somewhat elaborate argument, to prove that the cordial reception of such books agrees perfectly with genuine utilitarianism. As a people, it is generally conceded that we lack nationality of feeling. Narrow reasoners may think that this spirit is best promoted by absurd sensitiveness to foreign comments or testy alertness in regard to what is called national honor. We incline to the opinion, founded on well-established facts, both of history and human nature, that the best way to make an individual true to his political obligations is to promote his love of country; and experience shows that this is mainly induced by cherishing high and interesting associations in relation to his native land. Every well-recorded act honorable to the state, every noble deed consecrated by the effective pen of the historian, or illustrated in the glowing page of the novelist, tends wonderfully to such a result. Have not the hearts of the Scotch nurtured a deeper patriotism

since Walter Scott cast into the furrows of time his peerless romances? No light part in this elevated mission is accorded to the poet. Dante and Petrarch have done much to render Italy beloved. Béranger has given no inadequate expression to those feelings which bind soldier, artisan, and peasant to the soil of France. Here the bard can draw only upon brief chronicles, but God has arrayed this continent with a sublime and characteristic beauty, that should endear its mountains and streams to the American heart; and whoever ably depicts the natural glory of the country touches a chord which should yield responses of admiration and loyalty. In this point of view alone, then, we deem the minstrel who ardently sings of forest and sky, river and highland, as eminently worthy of recognition. This merit may be claimed for **Alfred B. Street** (born 1811), of Albany ( ), who was reared amid the most picturesque scenery of the State of New York. Street has an eye for Nature in all her moods. He has not roamed the woodlands in vain, nor have the changeful seasons passed him by without leaving vivid and lasting impressions. These his verse records with unusual fidelity and genuine emotion. \* \* \* \* \*

In a foreign land his poems would transport us at once to home. He is no second-hand limner, content to furnish insipid copies, but draws from reality. His pictures have the freshness of originals. They are graphic, detailed, never untrue, and often vigorous. He is essentially an American poet. His range is limited, and he has had the good sense not to wander from his sphere, candidly acknowledging that the heart of man has not furnished him the food for meditation which inspires a higher class of poets. He is emphatically an observer. In England we notice that these qualities have been recognized. His *Lost Hunter* has been finely illustrated there, thus affording the best evidence of the picturesque fertility of his muse. Many of his pieces also glow with patriotism. His *Gray Forest Eagle* is a noble lyric, full of spirit; his *Forest Scenes* are minutely, and at the same time elaborately, true. \* \* \* \*

Delicacy, sentiment, ideal enthusiasm, are not his by nature; but clear, bold, genial insight and feeling he possesses in a rare degree, and his poems worthily depict the phases of Nature, as she displays herself in this land, in all her picturesque wildness, solemn magnificence, and serene beauty.

To the descriptive talent as related to natural scenery, which we



have noted as the gift of our best poets, John Greenleaf Whittier (born 1808) ( ) unites the enthusiasm of the reformer and the sympathies of the patriot. There are a prophetic anathema and a bard-like invocation in some of his pieces. He is a true son of New England, and, beneath the calm, fraternal bearing of the Quaker, nurses the imaginative ardor of a devotee both of nature and humanity. The early promise of Brainard ( ), his fine poetic observation and sensibility, enshrined in several pleasing lyrics, and his premature death, are analogous to the career of Henry Kirke White. John Neal has written some odes, carelessly put together but having memorable passages. Emerson has published a small volume of quaint rhymes; Croswell wrote several short but impressive church poems, in which he has been ably followed by Bishop, Arthur Cleveland Coxe; Bayard Taylor's California ballads are full of truth, spirit, and melody, and his "Picture of St. John" is a melodious and graphic metrical tale; Albert Pike, of Arkansas, is the author of a series of hymns to the gods, after the manner of Keats, which have justly commanded favorable notice; Willis G. Clarke is remembered for his few but touching and finished elegiac pieces. Epes Sargent's *Poems of the Sea* are worthy of the subject, both in sentiment and style. F. S. Key, of Baltimore, was the author of the (*Star-Spangled Banner*), and Judge Hopkinson, of Philadelphia, wrote *Hail, Columbia*. George P. Morris ( ), among the honored contributors to American poetry, whose pieces are familiar, is recognized as the song-writer of America.

A large number of graceful versifiers, and a few writers of poetical genius, have arisen among the women of America. Southey has recorded, in no measured terms, his estimation of Mrs. Brooks, the author of *Zophiel*. The sentiment and melody of Mrs. Welby have made the name of *Amelia* precious in the west. Mrs. Sigourney's metrical writings are cherished by a large portion of the New England religious public ( ). The *Sinless Child* of Mrs. Oakes Smith is a melodious and imaginative poem, with many verses of graphic and metaphysical significance. The occasional pieces of Mrs. Embury, Mrs. Whitman, Mrs. Hewitt, and Miss Lynch are thoughtful, earnest, and artistic. The facility, playfulness, and ingenious conception of Mrs. Osgood ( ) rendered her a truly gifted *improvisatrice*. Miss Gould has written several pretty fanciful little poems, and Miss Sara Clark's *Ariadne* is worthy of Mrs. Nor-

ton. The Davidsons are instances of rare though melancholy precocity in the art. The moral purity, love of nature, domestic affection, and graceful expression which characterize the writings of our female poets, are remarkable. Many of them enjoy a high local reputation, and their effusions are quoted with zeal at the fireside. Taste rather than profound sympathies, sentiment rather than passion, and fancy more than imagination, are evident in these spontaneous, gentle, and often picturesque poems. They usually are more creditable to the refinement and pure feelings, than to the creative power or original style of the authors. Among a reading people, however, like our own, these beautiful native flowers, scattered by loving hands, are sweet mementos and tokens of ideal culture and gentle enthusiasm, in delightful contrast to the prevailing hardihood and materialism of character.\*

In the felicitous use of native materials, as well as in the religious sentiment and love of freedom, united with skill as an artist, *William Cullen Bryant* (born 1794) <sup>William C.</sup> is recognized as the best representative of American poetry, and we cannot better close this brief survey of native literature than by an examination of his poems; in which the traits of our scenery, the spirit of our institutions, and the devotional faith that proved the conservative element in our history, are all consecrated by poetic art. 1878.

The first thought which suggests itself in regard to Bryant is his respect for the art which he has so nobly illustrated. This is not less commendable than rare. To subserve the objects of party, to acquire a reputation upon which office may be sought, and to gratify personal ambition, the American poet is often tempted to sacrifice his true fame and the dignity of Art to the demands of Occasion. To this weakness Bryant has been almost invariably superior. He has preserved the elevation which he so early acquired. He has been loyal to the Muses. At their shrine his ministry seems ever free and sacred, wholly apart from the ordinary associations of life. With a pure heart and a lofty purpose has he hymned the glory of Nature and the praise of Freedom. To this we cannot but, in a great degree, ascribe the serene beauty of his

\* For a very complete and interesting survey of this class of writings, the reader is referred to Griswold's *Female Poets of America*. His list comprises nearly a hundred names; the biographical sketches afford a good insight into the domestic culture of the nation; and the specimens are various, and often beautiful.

verse. The mists of worldly motives dim the clearest vision, and the sweetest voice falters amid the strife of passion. As the patriarch went forth alone to muse at eventide, the reveries of genius have been to Bryant holy and private seasons. They are as unstained by the passing clouds of this troubled existence as the skies of his own "Prairies" by village smoke.

Here, where Nature is so magnificent, and civil institutions so fresh, where the experiment of republicanism is going on, and each individual must think, if he do not work, Poetry, to illustrate the age and reach its sympathies, should be thoughtful and vigorous. It should minister to no weak sentiment, but foster high, manly, and serious views. It should identify itself with the domestic affections, and tend to solemnize rather than merely adorn, existence. Such are the natural echoes of American life, and they characterize the poetry of Bryant.

Bryant's love of Nature gives the prevailing spirit to his poetry. The feeling with him seems quite instinctive. It is not sustained by a metaphysical theory, as in the case of Wordsworth, while it is imbued with more depth of pathos than is often discernible in Thomson. The feeling with which he looks upon the wonders of Creation is remarkably appropriate to the scenery of the New World. His poems convey, to an extraordinary degree, the actual impression which is awakened by our lakes, mountains, and forests. We esteem it one of Bryant's great merits that he has not only faithfully pictured the beauties, but caught the very spirit, of our scenery. His best poems have an anthem-like cadence, which accords with the vast scenes they celebrate. He approaches the mighty forests, whose shadowy haunts only the footstep of the Indian has penetrated, deeply conscious of its virgin grandeur. His harp is strung in harmony with the wild moan of the ancient boughs. Every moss-covered trunk breathes to him of the mysteries of Time, and each wild flower which lifts its pale buds above the brown and withered leaves, whispers some thought of gentleness. We feel, when musing with him amid the solitary woods, as if blessed with a companion peculiarly fitted to interpret their teachings. \* \* \* \*

The kind of interest with which Bryant regards Nature is common to the majority of minds in which a love of beauty is blended with reverence. This in some measure accounts for his popularity.

*Handwritten notes:*  
 The mists of worldly motives dim the clearest vision, and the sweetest voice falters amid the strife of passion.  
 Here, where Nature is so magnificent, and civil institutions so fresh, where the experiment of republicanism is going on, and each individual must think, if he do not work, Poetry, to illustrate the age and reach its sympathies, should be thoughtful and vigorous.  
 It should minister to no weak sentiment, but foster high, manly, and serious views.  
 It should identify itself with the domestic affections, and tend to solemnize rather than merely adorn, existence.  
 Such are the natural echoes of American life, and they characterize the poetry of Bryant.

He is the priest of a universal religion, and clothes in appropriate and harmonious language sentiments warmly felt and cherished. He requires no interpreter. There is nothing eccentric in his vision. Like all human beings, the burden of daily toil sometimes weighs heavy on his soul; the noisy activity of common life becomes hopeless; scenes of inhumanity, error, and suffering grow oppressive, or more personal causes of despondency make "the grasshopper a burden." Then he turns to the quietude and beauty of Nature for refreshment. There he loves to read the fresh tokens of creative beneficence. The scented air of the meadows cools his fevered brow. Vast prospects expand his thoughts beyond the narrow circle of worldly anxieties. The limpid stream, upon whose banks he wandered in childhood, reflects each fleecy cloud, and soothes his heart as the emblem of eternal peace. Thus faith is revived; the soul acquires renewed vitality, and the spirit of love is kindled again at the altar of God. Such views of Nature are perfectly accordant with the better impulses of the heart. There is nothing in them strained, unintelligible, or morbid. They are more or less familiar to all, and are as healthful overflowings of our nature as the prayer of repentance or the song of thanksgiving. They distinguish the poetry of Bryant, and form one of its dominant charms. \* \* \* \*

Bryant is eminently a contemplative poet. His thoughts are not less impressive than his imagery. Sentiment, except that which springs from benevolence and veneration, seldom lends a glow to his pages. Indeed, there is a remarkable absence of those spontaneous bursts of tenderness and passion which constitute the very essence of a large portion of Lowell's verse. He has none of the spirit of Campbell, or the narrative sprightliness of Scott. The few humorous attempts he has published are unworthy of his genius. Love is merely recognized in his poems; it rarely forms the staple of any composition. His strength obviously consists in description and philosophy. It is one advantage of this species of poetry that it survives youth, and is, by nature, progressive. Bryant's recent poems are fully equal, if not superior, to any he has written. With his inimitable pictures there is ever blended high speculation, or a reflective strain of moral command. Some elevating inference or cheering truth is elicited from every scene consecrated by his muse. A noble simplicity of language, com-

bined with these traits, often leads to the most genuine sublimity of expression.

In *The Fountain*, after a descriptive sketch that brings its limpid flow and flowery banks almost palpably before us, how exquisite is the chronicle that follows! Guided by the poet, we behold that gushing stream, ages past, in the solitude of the old woods, when canopied by the hickory and plane, the humming-bird playing amid its spray, and visited only by the wolf, who comes to "lap its waters," the deer who leaves her "delicate footprint" on its marge, and the "slow-paced bear that stopped and drank, and leaped across." Then the savage war-cry drowns its murmur, and the wounded foeman creeps slowly to its brink to "slake his death-thirst." Ere long a hunter's lodge is built, "with poles and boughs, beside the crystal well," and at last the lonely place is surrounded with the tokens of civilization. Thus the minstrel, even

"From the gushing of a simple fount,  
Has reasoned to the mighty universe."

The very rhythm of the stanzas *To a Waterfowl* gives the impression of its flight. Like the bird's sweeping wing, they float with a calm and majestic cadence to the ear. We see that solitary wanderer of the "cold thin atmosphere;" we watch, almost with awe, its serene course, until "the abyss of heaven has swallowed up its form," and then gratefully echo the bard's consoling inference.

"Eternal Love doth keep  
In his complacent arms the earth, the air, the deep."

To set forth, in strains the most attractive and lofty, this glorious sentiment, is the constant aim of his poetry. Gifted must be the man who is loyal to so high a vocation. From the din of outward activity, the vain turmoil of mechanical life, it is delightful and ennobling to turn to a true poet,—one who scatters flowers along our path, and lifts our gaze to the stars,—breaking, by a word, the spell of blind custom, so that we recognize once more the original glory of the universe, and hear again the latent music of our own souls. This high service has Bryant fulfilled. It will identify his memory with the loveliest scenes of his native land, and endear it to her children forever.

To

# I N D E X

## TO THE ENGLISH LITERATURE.

### A.

Addison, Joseph, 199, 214-223.  
 Akenside, Mark, 268.  
 Alfred, King, 18.  
 Alliteration, 16, 44, 45.  
 Anglo-Norman literature, 22.  
 Anglo-Saxon, 14-18; fusion with the Norman, 11, 12; prose, the vernacular, 18-20.  
 Anglo-Saxons, 7, 8.  
 Arbuthnot, Dr. John, 234.  
 Arnold, Dr. Thomas, 340.  
 Arthur, King, 24, 67.  
 Ascham, Roger, 58.  
 Asser, Bishop, 20.  
 Augustan Age, the, 197.  
 Austen, Miss, 332.

### B.

Bacon, Francis, 117-129, 237.  
 Bale, John, 76.  
 Ballads, 54-56, 283.  
 Barclay, Alexander, 52.  
 Barrow, Isaac, 137, 191, 192.  
 Baxter, Richard, 140.  
 Beattie, James, 255.  
 Beaumont, Francis, 107.  
 Bede, 19.  
 Bell, Currer. *See* Brontë.  
 Bentham, Jeremy, 349.  
 Bentley, Richard, 223, 227.  
 Beowulf, Lay of, 14-16.  
 Berkeley, Bishop, 235.  
 Berners, Lord, 57.  
 Bible, English Translation of, 99.  
 Blackstone, Sir William, 263.  
 Blackwood's Magazine, 346.  
 Blair, Robert, 265.  
 Blind Harry, 53.  
 Bolingbroke, Viscount, 235.  
 Boswell, James, 258.  
 Boyle and Bentley Controversy, 226, 227; Robert Boyle, 195.

Brontë, Charlotte, 332.  
 Browne, Thomas, 137.  
 Browning, Mrs., 315-317.  
 Brut d'Angleterre, 22.  
 Bull, George, 263.  
 Bulwer-Lytton, Sir E., 336, 337.  
 Bunyan, John, 162-165.  
 Burbadge, James, 78.  
 Burke, Edmund, 261, 262.  
 Burnet, Gilbert, 196.  
 Burnet, Thomas, 195.  
 Burney, Frances, 330.  
 Burns, Robert, 281-285.  
 Butler, Bishop, 264.  
 Butler, Samuel, 160, 162.  
 Byron, Lord, 299-306.

### C.

Cædmon, monk of Whitby, 16, 17.  
 Campbell, Dr. George, 264, Thomas, 313.  
 Canterbury Tales, the, 34-41.  
 Carew, Thomas, 136.  
 Caxton, 51.  
 Cecil, William, Lord Burleigh, 120.  
 Celts, 5, 6.  
 Chapman, George, 72, 80, 83, 108.  
 Charles II., 159.  
 Chatterton, Thomas, 276.  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 26-42, 71.  
 Chettle, Henry, 89.  
 Chevy Chase, 55.  
 Chillingworth, Wm., 137.  
 Clarendon, Earl of, 168, 169.  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 322-325.  
 Collins, William, 266.  
 Collier, Jeremy, 183.  
 Congreve, William, 180, 181.  
 Coverdale, Miles, 59.  
 Cowley, Abraham, 132.  
 Cowper, William, 273-275.  
 Crabbe, George, 278, 279.  
 Crashaw, Richard, 135.  
 Cudworth, Ralph, 170.

### D.

Daniel, Sammel, 70.  
 Danish invasion, 8.  
 Davenant, Sir Wm., 133.  
 Defoe, Daniel, 238.  
 Dekker, Thomas, 109, 112.  
 Denham, Sir John, 134.  
 De Quincey, Thomas, 348.  
 Dickens, Charles, 335, 336.  
 Donne, John, 130.  
 Douglas, Gawin, 53.  
 Drama, English, its origin, 73-81; The corrupt, 179-185.  
 Dryton, Michael, 70, 90.  
 Dryden, John, 132, 141-178, 183.  
 Dunbar, William, 53.

### E.

Edgeworth, Maria, 331, 332.  
 Edinburgh Review, 345.  
 Eighteenth Century, Remarks on the, 285-287.  
 Elizabethan Age, 60-70, 84-129.  
 English Language, fusion of its elements, 11, 12.  
 English Literature, divisions of, 13.  
 Essex, Earl of, 120.  
 Euphuism, 81.  
 Evelyn, John, 166, 167.

### F.

Fahyan, Robert, 57.  
 Faery Queen, the, 66-69.  
 Farquhar, George, 182.  
 Fielding, Henry, 241-243.  
 Fletcher, Giles, 71.  
 Fletcher, Phineas, 71.  
 Ford, John, 102, 110, 111.  
 Froissart, Chronicle of, translated into English, 57.  
 Fuller, Thomas, 138.

### G.

Gammer Gurton's Needle, 77.  
 Garrick, David, 255.

Gaskell, Mrs., 332.  
 Gay, John, 199, 210.  
 Gibbon, Edward, 252, 253.  
 Gifford, William, 245.  
 Godwin, William, 330.  
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 269-273.  
 Gower, John, 45, 46.  
 Gray, Thomas, 267, 268.  
 Greene, Matthew, 265.  
 Greene, Robert, 80, 82, 108.  
 Grote, George, 340.

## H.

Hall, Edward, 57; Joseph, 71.  
 Hallam, Henry, 341, 342.  
 Hamilton, Sir Wm., 343.  
 Harvey, Gabriel, 64, 67.  
 Hathaway, Ann, wife of Shakespeare.  
 Hawes, Stephen, 52.  
 Hazlitt, William, 347.  
 Hemans, Mrs., 317.  
 Henryson, Robert, 53.  
 Herbert, George, 135.  
 Hereford, translator of the Old Testament, 47.  
 Herrick, Robert, 136.  
 Heywood, John, 75.  
 Heywood, Thomas, 112.  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 127, 169, 170.  
 Hollinshed, Raphael, 60, 90, 114.  
 Home, Henry. *See* Kames.  
 Hood, Thomas, 314, 315.  
 Hooker, Richard, 116, 117.  
 Howard, Henry, 53.  
 Hume, David, 248-250.  
 Hunt, James Henry Leigh, 313, 314.  
 Hyde, Edward. *See* Clarendon.

## I.

Inductive Method. *See* Bacon.  
 Interludes, the, 75.  
 Ireland, William Henry, 277.

## J.

James I. of Scotland, 50;  
 VI. of Scotland, 102.  
 Jeffrey, Francis, 345.  
 John of Gaunt, 29, 32.  
 Johnson, Samuel, 254-261.  
 Jonson, Ben, 90, 102-107.  
 Junius, Letters of, 263.

## K.

Kames, Lord, 264.  
 Keats, John, 312.  
 Kyd, Thomas, 80, 82.

## L.

Lake School, The, 318.  
 Lamb, Charles, 347.  
 Landor, Walter Savage, 314.  
 Langlaude, 43.  
 Langue-d'Oc, the, 9, 10.  
 Langue-d'Oil, the, 9, 10.  
 Latin by English authors, 24.  
 Layamon, 22.  
 Lee, Nathaniel, 184.  
 Lewis, Matthew Gregory, 329.  
 Locke, John, 186-190.  
 Lockhart, John Gibson, 345, 346.  
 Lydgate, John, 49, 50.  
 Lyly, John, 80, 81.  
 Lyttelton, Lord, 264.

## M.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 340, 341.  
 Macpherson, James, 276.  
 Mandeville, Sir John, 47.  
 Marlowe, Christopher, 80, 82, 103.  
 Marston, John, 108, 112.  
 Marryat, Captain, 323.  
 Massinger, Philip, 199, 110.  
 Mermaid Club, The, 115.  
 Metrical Paraphrase of Scriptures, 16.  
 Middle English, 13, 22.  
 Middleton, Thomas, 112.  
 Mill, John Stuart, 344.  
 Milman, Henry Hart, 342, 343.  
 Milton, John, 17, 130, 133, 142-153.  
 Minot, Laurence.  
 Miracle Plays, 73-75.  
 Mirror for Magistrates, 61.  
 Mitford, Miss, 332.  
 Modern English, 13.  
 Montagu, Lady Mary, 236.  
 Moore, Thomas, 307-309.  
 Moralities, the, 74-76.  
 More, Sir Thomas, 56, 57, 237; Hannah, 279, 280.  
 Muller, Max, 22.  
 Mysteries or Miracles, 73.

## N.

Nash, Thomas, 108.  
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 194.  
 Nineteenth Century, Comments on, 338 *seq.*  
 Norman Conquest, effects of, 8, 9.  
 Norman fusion with Anglo-Saxon, 11, 12.  
 North, Christopher. *See* Wilson.  
 Norton, Thomas, 76.  
 Novel, The, 237.  
 Novelists, The first great, 237.

## O.

Occleve, Thomas, 28, 49.  
 Old English, 13; poetry, 14-18; prose, 13-20.  
 Orm or Ormin, 23.  
 Ormulum, the, 23.  
 Ossian, 276.  
 Otway, Thomas, 184.  
 Owl and Nighingale, the, 24.

## P.

Paley, William, 264.  
 Paston Letters, 51.  
 Peele, George, 80, 81.  
 Pepys, Samuel, 167.  
 Percy, Bishop, 288, 289.  
 Piers Ploughman, 43, 44.  
 Poets Laureate, 351.  
 Pope, Alexander, 23, 132, 198-210.  
 Pope's Quarrel with Addison, 230.  
 Printing, its importation into England, 51.  
 Prior, Matthew, 211.

## Q.

Quarles, Francis, 135.  
 Quarterly Review, 345.

## R.

Radcliffe, Ann, 329.  
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, 67, 83, 115.  
 Ralph Royster Doyster, 77.  
 Ramsay, Allan, 213.  
 Reformation, the, 114.  
 Reid, Dr. Thomas, 343.  
 Reviews, Edinburgh and Quarterly, 345.  
 Richardson, Samuel, 239-242.  
 Robertson, Wm., 250-252.  
 Romance languages, 9, 10.  
 Roman invasion, 6.  
 Rowe, Nicholas, 141, 184.

## S.

Sackville, Thomas, 61, 76.  
 Saxon element in language, 13.  
 Saxon Chronicles, 18.  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 288-298.  
 Scottish poetry in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 50, 53.  
 Semi-Saxon, duration of, 13.  
 Shadwell, Thomas, 174.  
 Shaftesbury, Lord, 174.  
 Shakespeare, Wm., 80, 85-101.  
 Shelley, Mrs., 329; Percy Bysshe, 310-312.  
 Shenstone, William, 268.  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 280.  
 Shirley, James, 112.

Sidney, Philip, 61, 64, 237.  
 Skelton, John, 52, 53, 71.  
 Smith, Adam, 263.  
 Smith, Sydney, 345.  
 Smollett, Tobias George, 243-245.  
 South, Robert, 193.  
 Southey, Robert, 325-327.  
 Spenser, Edmund, 63-70.  
 Spenserian stanza, 69.  
 Steele, Sir Richard, 199, 216-218.  
 Sterne, Laurence, 246, 247.  
 Still, John, 77.  
 St. John, Henry. *See* Bolingbroke.  
 Stow, John, 114.  
 Suckling, Sir John, 136.  
 Surrey, Earl of, 53, 54, 71.  
 Swift, Jonathan, 199, 224-234.

## T.

Taylor, Jeremy, 127, 139, 140.

Temple, Sir William,  
 Tentonic race, parentage of English nation traced to, 7.  
 Thackeray's estimate of Addison, 221, 223.  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 333-335.  
 Theatres, the early, 78, 79.  
 Thirlwall, Bishop, 340.  
 Thomson, James, 199, 265, 266.  
 Tillotson, Archbishop, 193.  
 Troubadours, 9, 10.  
 Trouvères, 9, 10.  
 Tyndale, William, 58, 59.

## U.

Udall, Nicholas, 77.  
 Unities, The Dramatic, 106, *n*.

## V.

Vanbrugh, Sir John, 182.

## W.

Waller, Edmund, 136.  
 Walpole, Horace, 328, 329.  
 Walton, Izaak, 165, 166.  
 Warton, Joseph, 268.  
 Warton, Thomas, 268.  
 Webster, John, 111, 112.  
 Whately, Archbishop, 344.  
 Wilson, Professor John, 346.  
 Wither, George, 134.  
 Wordsworth, Wm., 42, 318-323.  
 Wyatt, Sir Thomas, 53, 54, 71.  
 Wycherley, William, 180.  
 Wycliffe, John, 29, 47.

## Y.

Young, Edward, 212.



# I N D E X

## TO THE AMERICAN LITERATURE.

---

### A.

Adams, 358.  
 Adams, John Q., 361, 377.  
 Allston, W., 377, 383, 385.  
 Alsop, 384.  
 Ames, Fisher, 361.  
 Anthon, Prof., 377.  
 Audubon, 377, 378.

### B.

Bancroft, G., 364, 376.  
 Bigelow, 378.  
 Bird, Dr. R., 382.  
 Boker, G. H., 393.  
 Bowditch, Dr., 377.  
 Bradford, Gov., 384.  
 Bradstreet, Mrs., 384.  
 Brainard, 395.  
 Breckenridge, 378.  
 Brooks, C. T., 376.  
 Brooks, Mrs., 395.  
 Brown, C. Brockden, 378.  
 Brownson, 355.  
 Bryant, W. C., 378, 396-399.  
 Buell, Judge, 377.  
 Burr, 359.  
 Bush, 355.  
 Butler, W. A., 393.  
 Byles, Dr., 384.

### C.

Calhoun, 361.  
 Calvert, G. H., 378.  
 Carey, H. C., 377.  
 Carter, 377.  
 Catlin, 377, 378.  
 Channing, William Ellery, 355, 356.  
 Cheever, N. E., 378.  
 Choate, 361.  
 Clark, Miss Sara, 395.  
 Clarke, W. G., 377, 395.  
 Clay, 361.  
 Cleveland, 378.  
 Clifton, W., 335.  
 Coggeshall, 378.  
 Colman, H., 377.  
 Colton, 377, 378.  
 Cooke, 333.  
 Cooper,  
 Cooper, Dr., 377.  
 Cooper, J. F., 369, 378-381.  
 Cox, Cleveland, 395.  
 Crosswell, 395.

Curtis, George W., 378.  
 Cushing, 378.

### D.

Dana, Richard H., 374, 382, 386.  
 Dana, Richard H., Jr., 378.  
 Davidsons, 396.  
 Delano, 378.  
 Dennie, 370.  
 De Tocqueville, 356.  
 Dewey, 378.  
 Downing, A. J., 377.  
 Drake, 389, 390.  
 Duyckinck, 375.  
 Dwight, J. S., 377, 384.

### E.

Edwards, 351, 354.  
 Eliot, 363.  
 Embury, Mrs., 395.  
 Emerson, 375, 376, 395.  
 Everett, A. H., 374, 377.  
 Everett, Edward, 361-363.

### F.

Fay, T. S., 377, 382.  
 Fisk, 378.  
 Flint, 378.  
 Flint, Timothy, 382.  
 Force, 363.  
 Fox, George, 355.  
 Franklin, 370.  
 Fremont, 378.  
 Freneau, P., 384.  
 Frisbie, Prof., 393.  
 Fuller, Miss, 375.

### G.

Gallatin, A., 377.  
 Gillespie, 378.  
 Godfrey, T., 384.  
 Gould, Miss, 395.  
 Greeley, Horace, 377.  
 Greene, A. G., 393.  
 Gregg, 378.

### H.

Halleck, Fitz-Greene, 388, 389.  
 Hamilton, Alexander, 358, 359.

Hart, J. S., 375.  
 Hawthorne, N., 378, 381, 382.  
 Headley, 378.  
 Henry, Patrick, 358.  
 Hewitt, Mrs., 395.  
 Hildreth, 366.  
 Hillhouse, 386.  
 Hoffman, 378, 382, 390.  
 Holland, J. G., 383.  
 Holmes, O. W., 392.  
 Honeywood, 384.  
 Hopkins, 355.  
 Hopkinson, Judge, 395.  
 Hudson, H. N., 374.  
 Humphreys, 384.  
 Hutchinson, Anne, 354.

### I.

Irving, W., 368, 371-374, 376, 378, 383.

### J.

Jay, 358.  
 Jewett, 378.  
 Judd, 388.

### K.

Kendall, 378.  
 Kennedy, J. P., 382.  
 Kent, 361, 377.  
 Key, F. S., 395.  
 Kimball, 377.  
 Kidder, 378.  
 King, 378.  
 Kip, 378.  
 Kirkland, Mrs., 377.

### L.

Lanman, 378.  
 Lewis and Clark, 377.  
 Long, 378.  
 Longfellow, 376, 378, 383, 391, 392.  
 Lossing, B. J., 366.  
 Lowell, J. R., 375, 377, 392.  
 Lyman, 378.  
 Lynch, 378.  
 Lynch, Miss, 395.

### M.

Mackenzle, 378.  
 Marsh, G. P., 388.

Mather, Increase and Cotton, 334.  
 Matthews, Cornelius, 377.  
 Mayo, 383.  
 M'Connell, 382.  
 Melville, 378, 383.  
 Middleton, 377.  
 Mitchell, Donald G., 377.  
 Morris, G. P., 395.  
 Morris, Gouverneur, 353.  
 Motley, 368.  
 Mumford, W., 385.  
 Murray, 355.

## N.

Neal, John, 383, 395.  
 Neal, J. C., 377.  
 Norman, 378.  
 Norton, A., 374, 393.  
 Nourse, J. D., 377.

## O.

Osgood, Mrs., 395.  
 Otis, 358.

## P.

Faine, R. T., 385.  
 Palfrey, J. G., 368, 377.  
 Palmer, 393.  
 Parkman, 369, 378.  
 Parsons, Dr., 393.  
 Parton, 368.  
 Paulding, 382, 385.  
 Percival, J. G., 388.  
 Pickering, 377.  
 Pierpont, J., 386.  
 Pike, A., 395.

Pinckney, 358, 393.  
 Poe, E. A., 383, 393.  
 Prescott, W. H., 366, 367.

## R.

Ragnet, 377.  
 Ralph, 384.  
 Ramsay, David, 364.  
 Raymond, 377.  
 Reed, 374.  
 Ripley, G., 376.  
 Robinson, 378.  
 Ruschenberger, 378.  
 Rush, Dr., 377.  
 Rutledge, 358.

## S.

Sanderson, 378.  
 Sands, R. C., 377.  
 Sargent, Epes, 395.  
 Schoolcraft, 377, 378.  
 Shaler, 378.  
 Sigourney, Lydia H., 395.  
 Silliman, 378.  
 Simms, W. Gilmore, 382.  
 Smith, Mrs. E. Oakes, 395.  
 Sparks, 363.  
 Spencer, 378.  
 Spragne, 387.  
 Squier, 377, 378.  
 Stephens, 378.  
 Story, 361.  
 Street, Alfred B., 394.

## T.

Taylor, B., 378, 395.  
 Thomas, 382.

Thorcan, 376.  
 Thorpe, 377, 378.  
 Ticknor, George, 375.  
 Townsend, 378.  
 Trumbull, 384.  
 Tucker, 377.  
 Tudor, 377.

## V.

Verplanck, 361.

## W.

Walker, James, 375.  
 Wallace, 378.  
 Walsh, R., 377.  
 Ware, Henry, 393.  
 Ware, William, 383.  
 Warren, 358, 378.  
 Wayland, 375, 377.  
 Webber, 378.  
 Webster, Daniel, 358, 360.  
 Webster, Noah, 377.  
 Welby, Mrs., 395.  
 Wheaton, 368.  
 Whipple, E. P., 375.  
 Whitefield, 355.  
 Whitman, Mrs., 395.  
 Whittier, John G., 395.  
 Wilde, R. H., 374, 393.  
 Wilkes, 378.  
 Williams, Roger, 354, 384.  
 Willis, N. P., 377, 378, 383, 390, 391.  
 Wilson, 377, 378.  
 Wirt, William, 361, 377.  
 Wise, 378.  
 Woodworth, 393.

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